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NOVELS
OF
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

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VOL. VII.

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A STRANGE STORY

BY

LORD LYTON

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To doubt and to be astonished is to recognise our ignorance. Hence it is that the lover of wisdom is in a certain sort a lover of mythi (*θαυμάσιος πῶς*), for the subject of mythi is the astonishing and marvellous." SIR W. HAMILTON (after Aristotle), *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. i. p. 78.

A STRANGE STORY.



CHAPTER XLII.

It was twilight when I entered, unannounced (as had been my wont in our familiar intercourse), the quiet sitting-room in which I expected to find mother and child. But Lilian was there alone, seated by the open window, her hands crossed and drooping on her knee, her eye fixed upon the darkening summer skies, in which the evening star had just stolen forth, bright and steadfast, near the pale sickle of a half-moon that was dimly visible, but gave as yet no light.

Let any lover imagine the reception he would expect to meet from his betrothed, coming into her presence after he had passed triumphant through a terrible peril to life and fame—and conceive what ice froze my blood, what anguish weighed down my heart, when Lilian, turning towards me, rose not, spoke not—gazed at me heedlessly, as if at some indifferent stranger—

and—and—— But no matter! I cannot bear to recall it even now, at the distance of years! I sat down beside her, and took her hand, without pressing it; it rested languidly, passively in mine—one moment;—I dropped it then, with a bitter sigh.

“Lilian,” I said quietly, “you love me no longer. Is it not so?”

She raised her eyes to mine, looked at me wistfully, and pressed her hand on her forehead, then said, in a strange voice, “Did I ever love you? What do you mean?”

“Lilian, Lilian, rouse yourself; are you not, while you speak, under some spell, some influence which you cannot describe nor account for?”

She paused a moment before she answered, calmly, “No! Again I ask what do you mean?”

“What do I mean? Do you forget that we are betrothed? Do you forget how often, and how recently, our vows of affection and constancy have been exchanged?”

“No, I do not forget; but I must have deceived you and myself——”

“It is true, then, that you love me no more?”

“I suppose so.”

“But, oh, Lilian, is it that your heart is only closed to me? or is it—oh, answer truthfully—is it given to another?—to him—to him—against whom I warned you, whom I implored you not to receive? Tell me, at least, that your love is not gone to Margrave——”

“To him—love to him! Oh no—no——”

“What, then, is your feeling towards him?”

Lilian's face grew visibly paler—even in that dim light. “I know not,” she said, almost in a whisper; “but it is—partly awe—partly——”

“What?”

“Abhorrence!” she said, almost fiercely, and rose to her feet with a wild, defying start.

“If that be so,” I said gently, “you would not grieve were you never again to see him——”

“But I shall see him again,” she murmured, in a tone of weary sadness, and sank back once more into her chair.

“I think not,” said I, “and I hope not. And now hear me and heed me, Lilian. It is enough for me, no matter what your feelings towards another, to learn from yourself that the affection you once professed for me is gone. I release you from your troth. If folks ask why we two henceforth separate the lives we had agreed to join, you may say, if you please, that you could not give your hand to a man who had known the taint of a felon's prison, even on a false charge. If that seems to you an ungenerous reason, we will leave it to your mother to find a better. Farewell! For your own sake I can yet feel happiness—happiness to hear that you do not love the man against whom I warn you still more solemnly than before! Will you not give me your hand in parting—and have I not spoken your own wish?”

She turned away her face, and resigned her hand to me in silence. Silently I held it in mine, and my

emotions nearly stifled me. One symptom of regret, of reluctance, on her part, and I should have fallen at her feet, and cried, "Do not let us break a tie which our vows should have made indissoluble ; heed not my offers—wrung from a tortured heart ! You cannot have ceased to love me !" But no such symptom of relenting showed itself in her, and with a groan I left the room.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I WAS just outside the garden-door, when I felt an arm thrown round me, my cheek kissed and wetted with tears. Could it be Lilian? Alas, no! It was her mother's voice, that, between laughing and crying, exclaimed hysterically: "This is joy, to see you again, and on these thresholds. I have just come from your house; I went there on purpose to congratulate you, and to talk to you about Lilian. But you have seen her?"

"Yes; I have but this moment left her. Come this way." I drew Mrs Ashleigh back into the garden, along the old winding walk, which the shrubs concealed from view of the house. We sat down on a rustic seat, where I had often sat with Lilian, midway between the house and the Monk's Well. I told the mother what had passed between me and her daughter; I made no complaint of Lilian's coldness and change; I did not hint at its cause. "Girls of her age will change," said I, "and all that now remains is for us to agree on such a tale to our curious neighbours, as may rest the whole blame on me. Man's Name is of robust fibre; it could not push its way to a place in the

world, if it could not bear, without sinking, the load idle tongues may lay on it. Not so Woman's Name—what is but gossip against Man, is scandal against Woman.”

“Do not be rash, my dear Allen,” said Mrs Ashleigh, in great distress. “I feel for you, I understand you ; in your case I might act as you do. I cannot blame you. Lilian is changed—changed unaccountably. Yet sure I am that the change is only on the surface, that her heart is really yours, as entirely and as faithfully as ever it was ; and that later, when she recovers from the strange, dreamy kind of torpor which appears to have come over all her faculties and all her affections, she would awake with a despair which you cannot conjecture, to the knowledge that you had renounced her.”

“I have not renounced her,” said I, impatiently ; “I did but restore her freedom of choice. But pass by this now, and explain to me more fully the change in your daughter, which I gather from your words is not confined to me.”

“I wished to speak of it before you saw her, and for that reason came to your house. It was on the morning in which we left her aunt's to return hither that I first noticed something peculiar in her look and manner. She seemed absorbed and absent—so much so that I asked her several times to tell me what made her so grave ; but I could only get from her that she had had a confused dream which she could not recall distinctly enough to relate, but that she was sure it

boded evil. During the journey she became gradually more herself, and began to look forward with delight to the idea of seeing you again. Well, you came that evening. What passed between you and her you know best. You complained that she slighted your request to shun all acquaintance with Mr Margrave. I was surprised that, whether your wish were reasonable or not, she could have hesitated to comply with it. I spoke to her about it after you had gone, and she wept bitterly at thinking she had displeased you."

"She wept! You amaze me. Yet the next day what a note she returned to mine!"

"The next day the change in her became very visible to me. She told me, in an excited manner, that she was convinced she ought not to marry you. Then came, the following day, the news of your committal. I heard of it, but dared not break it to her. I went to our friend the mayor, to consult with him what to say, what do; and to learn more distinctly than I had done from terrified, incoherent servants, the rights of so dreadful a story. When I returned, I found, to my amazement, a young stranger in the drawing-room; it was Mr Margrave—Miss Brabazon had brought him, at his request. Lilian was in the room too, and my astonishment was increased when she said to me, with a singular smile, vague but tranquil: 'I know all about Allen Fenwick; Mr Margrave has told me all. He is a friend of Allen's. He says there is no cause for fear.' Mr Margrave then apologised to me for his intrusion in a caressing, kindly manner, as if one of the family.

He said he was so intimate with you that he felt that he could best break to Miss Ashleigh an information she might receive elsewhere, for that he was the only man in the town who treated the charge with ridicule. You know the wonderful charm of this young man's manner. I cannot explain to you how it was, but in a few moments I was as much at home with him as if he had been your brother. To be brief, having once come, he came constantly. He had moved, two days before you went to Derval Court, from his hotel to apartments in Mr ——'s house, just opposite. We could see him on his balcony from our terrace; he would smile to us and come across. I did wrong in slighting your injunction, and suffering Lilian to do so. I could not help it, he was such a comfort to me—to her, too—in her tribulation. He alone had no doleful words, wore no long face; he alone was invariably cheerful. 'Everything,' he said, 'would come right in a day or two.'"

"And Lilian could not but admire this young man, he is so beautiful."

"Beautiful? Well, perhaps. But if you have a jealous feeling, you were never more mistaken. Lilian, I am convinced, does more than dislike him; he has inspired her with repugnance, with terror. And much as I own I like him, in his wild, joyous, careless, harmless way, do not think I flatter you if I say that Mr Margrave is not the man to make any girl untrue to you—untrue to a lover with infinitely less advantages than you may pretend to. He would be an universal

favourite, I grant ; but there is something in him, or a something wanting in him, which makes liking and admiration stop short of love. I know not why ; perhaps because, with all his good-humour, he is so absorbed in himself, so intensely egotistical—so light ; were he less clever, I should say so frivolous. He could not make love, he could not say, in the serious tone of a man in earnest, ‘ I love you.’ He owned as much to me, and owned, too, that he knew not even what love was. As to myself—Mr Margrave appears rich ; no whisper against his character or his honour ever reached me. Yet were you out of the question, and were there no stain on his birth—nay, were he as high in rank and wealth as he is favoured by Nature in personal advantages—I confess I could never consent to trust him with my daughter’s fate. A voice at my heart would cry, ‘ No !’ It may be an unreasonable prejudice, but I could not bear to see him touch Lilian’s hand !”

“ Did she never, then—never suffer him even to take her hand ?”

“ Never. Do not think so meanly of her as to suppose that she could be caught by a fair face, a graceful manner. Reflect ; just before, she had refused, for your sake, Ashleigh Sumner, whom Lady Haughton said ‘ no girl in her senses could refuse ;’ and this change in Lilian really began before we returned to L—— ; before she had even seen Mr Margrave. I am convinced it is something in the reach of your skill as physician—it is on the nerves, the system. I will give you a proof of what I say, only do not betray me to

her. It was during your imprisonment, the night before your release, that I was awakened by her coming to my bedside. She was sobbing as if her heart would break. 'O mother, mother!' she cried, 'pity me, help me—I am so wretched!' 'What is the matter, darling?' 'I have been so cruel to Allen, and I know I shall be so again. I cannot help it. Do not question me; only if we are separated, if he cast me off, or I reject him, tell him some day—perhaps when I am in my grave—not to believe appearances; and that I, in my heart of hearts, never ceased to love him!'"

"She said that! You are not deceiving me?"

"Oh no! how can you think so?"

"There is hope still," I murmured; and I bowed my head upon my hands, hot tears forcing their way through the clasped fingers.

"One word more," said I; "you tell me that Lilian has a repugnance to this Margrave, and yet that she found comfort in his visits—a comfort that could not be wholly ascribed to cheering words he might say about myself, since it is all but certain that I was not, at that time, uppermost in her mind. Can you explain this apparent contradiction?"

"I cannot, otherwise than by a conjecture which you would ridicule."

"I can ridicule nothing now. What is your conjecture?"

"I know how much you disbelieve in the stories one hears of animal magnetism and electro-biology, otherwise——"

“You think that Margrave exercises some power of that kind over Lilian? Has he spoken of such a power?”

“Not exactly; but he said that he was sure Lilian possessed a faculty that he called by some hard name—not clairvoyance, but a faculty which he said, when I asked him to explain, was akin to prevision—to second-sight. Then he talked of the Priestesses who had administered the ancient oracles. Lilian, he said, reminded him of them, with her deep eyes and mysterious smile.”

“And Lilian heard him? What said she?”

“Nothing; she seemed in fear while she listened.”

“He did not offer to try any of those arts practised by professional mesmerists and other charlatans?”

“I thought he was about to do so, but I forestalled him, saying I never would consent to any experiment of that kind, either on myself or my daughter.”

“And he replied——?”

“With his gay laugh, ‘that I was very foolish; that a person possessed of such a faculty as he attributed to Lilian, would, if the faculty were developed, be an invaluable adviser.’ He would have said more, but I begged him to desist. Still I fancy at times—do not be angry—that he does somehow or other bewitch her, unconsciously to herself; for she always knows when he is coming. Indeed, I am not sure that he does not bewitch myself, for I by no means justify my conduct in admitting him to an intimacy so familiar, and in spite of your wish; I have reproached myself, resolved

to shut my door on him, or to show by my manner that his visits were unwelcome ; yet when Lilian has said, in the drowsy lethargic tone which has come into her voice (her voice naturally earnest and impressive, though always low), ‘ Mother, he will be here in two minutes—I wish to leave the room and cannot ’—I, too, have felt as if something constrained me against my will ; as if, in short, I were under that influence which Mr Vigors—whom I will never forgive for his conduct to you—would ascribe to mesmerism. But will you not come in and see Lilian again ? ”

“ No, not to-night ; but watch and heed her, and if you see aught to make you honestly believe that she regrets the rupture of the old tie from which I have released her—why, you know, Mrs Ashleigh, that—that——” My voice failed—I wrung the good woman’s hand, and went my way.

I had always till then considered Mrs Ashleigh—if not as Mrs Poyntz described her—“ commonplace weak ”—still of an intelligence somewhat below mediocrity. I now regarded her with respect as well as grateful tenderness ; her plain sense had divined what all my boasted knowledge had failed to detect in my earlier intimacy with Margrave—viz., that in him there was a something present, or a something wanting, which forbade love and excited fear. Young, beautiful, wealthy, seemingly blameless in life as he was, she would not have given her daughter’s hand to him !

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE next day my house was filled with visitors. I had no notion that I had so many friends. Mr Vigors wrote me a generous and handsome letter, owning his prejudices against me on account of his sympathy with poor Dr Lloyd, and begging my pardon for what he now felt to have been harshness, if not distorted justice. But what most moved me, was the entrance of Strahan, who rushed up to me with the heartiness of old college days. "Oh, my dear Allen, can you ever forgive me?—that I should have disbelieved your word—should have suspected you of abstracting my poor cousin's memoir!"

"Is it found, then?"

"Oh, yes; you must thank Margrave. He, clever fellow, you know, came to me on a visit yesterday. He put me at once on the right scent. Only guess; but you never can! It was that wretched old house-keeper who purloined the manuscript. You remember she came into the room while you were looking at the memoir. She heard us talk about it; her curiosity was roused; she longed to know the history of her old master, under his own hand; she could not sleep;

she heard me go up to bed ; she thought you might leave the book on the table when you, too, went to rest. She stole down-stairs, peeped through the key-hole of the library, saw you asleep, the book lying before you, entered, took away the book softly, meant to glance at its contents and to return it. You were sleeping so soundly she thought you would not wake for an hour ; she carried it into the library, leaving the door open, and there began to pore over it ; she stumbled first on one of the passages in Latin ; she hoped to find some part in plain English, turned over the leaves, putting her candle close to them, for the old woman's eyes were dim, when she heard you make some sound in your sleep. Alarmed, she looked round ; you were moving uneasily in your seat, and muttering to yourself. From watching you she was soon diverted by the consequence of her own confounded curiosity and folly. In moving, she had unconsciously brought the poor manuscript close to the candle ; the leaves caught the flame ; her own cap and hand burning first made her aware of the mischief done. She threw down the book ; her sleeve was in flames ; she had first to tear off the sleeve, which was, luckily for her, not sewn to her dress. By the time she recovered presence of mind to attend to the book, half its leaves were reduced to tinder. She did not dare then to replace what was left of the manuscript on your table ; returned, with it, to her room, hid it, and resolved to keep her own secret. I should never have guessed it ; I had never even spoken to her of the occurrence ; but

when I talked over the disappearance of the book to Margrave last night, and expressed my disbelief of your story, he said in his merry way—"But do you think that Fenwick is the only person curious about your cousin's odd ways and strange history? Why, every servant in the household would have been equally curious. You have examined your servants, of course?" "No, I never thought of it." "Examine them now, then. Examine especially that old housekeeper. I observe a great change in her manner since I came here, weeks ago, to look over the house. She has something on her mind—I see it in her eyes." Then it occurred to me, too, that the woman's manner had altered, and that she seemed always in a tremble and a fidget. I went at once to her room, and charged her with stealing the book. She fell on her knees, and told the whole story as I have told it you, and as I shall take care to tell it to all to whom I have so foolishly blabbed my yet more foolish suspicions of yourself. But can you forgive me, old friend?"

"Heartily, heartily! And the book is burned?"

"See;" and he produced a mutilated manuscript. Strange, the part burned—reduced, indeed, to tinder—was the concluding part that related to Haroun—to Grayle: no vestige of that part was left; the earlier portions were scorched and mutilated, though in some places still decipherable; but as my eye hastily ran over those places, I saw only mangled sentences of the experimental problems which the writer had so minutely elaborated.

“Will you keep the manuscript as it is, and as long as you like?” said Strahan.

“No, no; I will have nothing more to do with it. Consult some other man of science. And so this is the old woman’s whole story? No accomplice—none? No one else shared her curiosity and her task?”

“No. Oddly enough, though, she made much the same excuse for her pitiful folly that the madman made for his terrible crime; she said ‘the Devil put it into her it head.’ Of course he did, as he puts everything wrong into any one’s head. That does not mend the matter.”

“How! did she, too, say she saw a Shadow and heard a voice?”

“No; not such a liar as that, and not mad enough for such a lie. But she said that when she was in bed, thinking over the book, something irresistible urged her to get up and go down into the study; swore she felt something lead her by the hand; swore, too, that when she first discovered the manuscript was not in English, something whispered in her ear to turn over the leaves and approach them to the candle. But I had no patience to listen to all this rubbish. I sent her out of the house, bag and baggage. But, alas! is this to be the end of all my wise cousin’s grand discoveries?”

True, of labours that aspired to bring into the chart of science new worlds, of which even the traditionary rumour was but a voice from the land of fable—nought left but broken vestiges of a daring footstep! The

hope of a name imperishable amidst the loftiest hierarchy of Nature's secret temple, with all the pomp of recorded experiment, that applied to the mysteries of Egypt and Chaldea the inductions of Bacon, the tests of Liebig—was there nothing left of this but what, here and there, some puzzled student might extract, garbled, mutilated, perhaps unintelligible, from shreds of sentences, wrecks of problems! O mind of man, can the works, on which thou wouldst found immortality below, be annulled into smoke and tinder by an inch of candle in the hand of an old woman!

When Strahan left me, I went out, but not yet to visit patients. I stole through by-paths into the fields; I needed solitude to bring my thoughts into shape and order. What was delusion, and what not?—was I right or the Public? Was Margrave really the most innocent and serviceable of human beings, kindly affectionate, employing a wonderful acuteness for benignant ends? Was I, in truth, indebted to him for the greatest boon one man can bestow on another? For life rescued, for fair name justified? Or had he, by some demoniac sorcery, guided the hand of the murderer against the life of the person who alone could imperil his own? had he, by the same dark spells, urged the woman to the act that had destroyed the only record of his monstrous being—the only evidence that I was not the sport of an illusion in the horror with which he inspired me?

But if the latter supposition could be admissible did he use his agents only to betray them afterwards

to exposure, and that without any possible clue to his own detection as the instigator? Then there came over me confused recollections of tales of medieval witchcraft, which I had read in boyhood. Were there not on judicial record attestation and evidence, solemn and circumstantial, of powers analogous to those now exercised by Margrave? Of sorcerers instigating to sin through influences ascribed to Demons—making their apparitions glide through guarded walls, their voices heard from afar in the solitude of dungeons or monastic cells? subjugating victims to their will, by means which no vigilance could have detected, if the victims themselves had not confessed the witchcraft that had ensnared—courting a sure and infamous death in that confession—preferring such death to a life so haunted? Were stories so gravely set forth in the pomp of judicial evidence, and in the history of times comparatively recent, indeed, to be massed—pell-mell together, as a *moles indigesta* of senseless superstition,—all the witnesses to be deemed liars? all the victims and tools of the sorcerers, lunatics? all the examiners or judges, with their solemn gradations—lay and clerical—from Commissions of Inquiry to Courts of Appeal—to be despised for credulity, loathed for cruelty; or, amidst records so numerous, so imposingly attested,—were there the fragments of a terrible truth? And had our ancestors been so unwise in those laws we now deem so savage, by which the world was rid of scourges more awful and more potent than the felon with his candid dagger? Fell instiga-

tors of the evil in men's secret hearts—shaping into action the vague, half-formed desire, and guiding with agencies, impalpable, unseen, their spell-bound instruments of calamity and death.

Such were the gloomy questions that I—by repute, the sternest advocate of common sense against fantastic errors—by profession, the searcher into flesh and blood, and tissue, and nerve, and sinew, for the causes of all that disease the mechanism of the universal human frame—I, self-boasting physician, sceptic, philosopher, materialist—revolved, not amidst gloomy pines, under grim winter skies, but as I paced slow through laughing meadows, and by the banks of merry streams, in the ripeness of the golden August: the hum of insects in the fragrant grass, the flutter of birds amid the delicate green of boughs checkered by playful sunbeams and gentle shadows, and ever in sight of the resorts of busy work-day man. Walls, roof-tops, church-spires rising high. There, white and modern, the handwriting of our race, in this practical nineteenth century, on its square plain masonry and Doric shafts, the Town Hall, central in the animated market-place. And I—I—prying into long-neglected corners and dust-holes of memory for what my reason had flung there as worthless rubbish; reviving the jargon of French law, in the *procès verbal* against a Gille de Retz, or an Urbain Grandier, and sifting the equity of sentences on witchcraft!

Bursting the links of this ghastly soliloquy with a laugh at my own folly, I struck into a narrow path

that led back towards the city by a quiet and rural suburb: the path wound on through a wide and solitary churchyard, at the base of the Abbey Hill. Many of the former dwellers on that eminence now slept in the lowly burial-ground at its foot. And the place, mournfully decorated with the tombs which still jealously mark distinctions of rank amidst the levelling democracy of the grave, was kept trim with the care which comes half from piety, and half from pride.

I seated myself on a bench, placed between the clipped yew-trees that bordered the path from the entrance to the church porch; deeming vaguely that my own perplexing thoughts might imbibe a quiet from the quiet of the place.

“And oh,” I murmured to myself—“oh that I had one bosom friend to whom I might freely confide all these torturing riddles which I cannot solve—one who could read my heart; light up its darkness; exercise its spectres; one in whose wisdom I could welcome a guide through the Nature which now suddenly changes her aspect, opening out from the walls with which I had fenced and enclosed her as mine own formal garden;—all her pathways, therein, trimmed to my footstep; all her blooms grouped and harmonised to my own taste in colour; all her groves, all her caverns but the soothing retreats of a Muse or a Science; opening out—opening out, desert on desert, into clueless and measureless space! Gone is the garden? Were its confines too narrow for Nature? Be it so! The Desert replaces the garden, but where ends the Desert?

Reft from my senses are the laws which gave order and place to their old questionless realm. I stand lost and appalled amidst Chaos. Did my Mind misconstrue the laws it deemed fixed and immutable? Be it so! But still Nature cannot be lawless; Creation is not a Chaos. If my senses deceive me in some things, they are still unerring in others; if thus, in some things, fallacious, still, in other things, truthful. Are there within me senses finer than those I have cultured, or without me vistas of knowledge which instincts, apart from my senses, divine? So long as I deal with the Finite alone, my senses suffice me; but when the Infinite is obtruded upon me, there, are my senses faithless deserters? If so, is there aught else in my royal resources of Man—whose ambition it is, from the first dawn of his glory as Thinker, to invade, and to subjugate Nature,—is there aught else to supply the place of those traitors the senses, who report to my Reason, their judge and their sovereign, as truths, seen and heard, tales which my Reason forfeits her sceptre if she does not disdain as lies? Oh, for a friend! oh, for a guide!”

And as I so murmured, my eye fell upon the form of a kneeling child;—at the farther end of the burial-ground, beside a grave with its new headstone gleaming white amidst the older moss-grown tombs, a female child, her head bowed, her hands clasped. I could see but the outline of her small form in its sable dress—an infant beside the dead.

My eye and my thoughts were turned from that

silent figure, too absorbed in my restless tumult of doubt and dread, for sympathy with the grief or the consolation of a kneeling child. And yet I should have remembered that tomb! Again I murmured, with a fierce impatience, "Oh, for a friend! oh, for a guide!"

I heard steps on the walk under the yews. And an old man came in sight, slightly bent, with long grey hair, but still with enough of vigour for years to come—in his tread, firm, though slow—in the unshrunk muscle of his limbs and the steady light of his clear blue eye. I started. Was it possible? That countenance, marked, indeed, with the lines of laborious thought, but sweet in the mildness of humanity, and serene in the peace of conscience! I could not be mistaken. Julius Faber was before me—the profound pathologist, to whom my own proud self-esteem acknowledged inferiority, without humiliation; the generous benefactor to whom I owed my own smoothed entrance into the arduous road of fame and fortune. I had longed for a friend, a guide; what I sought stood suddenly at my side.

CHAPTER XLV.

EXPLANATION, on Faber's part, was short and simple. The nephew whom he designed as the heir to his wealth, had largely outstripped the liberal allowance made to him—had incurred heavy debts; and, in order to extricate himself from the debts, had plunged into ruinous speculations. Faber had come back to England to save his heir from prison or outlawry, at the expense of more than three-fourths of the destined inheritance. To add to all, the young man had married a young lady without fortune; the uncle only heard of this marriage on arriving in England. The spendthrift was hiding from his creditors in the house of his father-in-law, in one of the western counties. Faber there sought him; and, on becoming acquainted with his wife, grew reconciled to the marriage, and formed hopes of his nephew's future redemption. He spoke, indeed, of the young wife with great affection. She was good and sensible; willing and anxious to encounter any privation by which her husband might retrieve the effects of his folly. "So," said Faber, "on consultation with this excellent creature—for my poor nephew is so broken down by repentance, that others must think for him how to exalt repentance into reform—my plans

were determined. I shall remove my prodigal from all scenes of temptation. He has youth, strength, plenty of energy, hitherto misdirected. I shall take him from the Old World into the New. I have decided on Australia. The fortune still left to me, small here, will be ample capital there. It is not enough to maintain us separately, so we must all live together. Besides, I feel that, though I have neither the strength nor the experience which could best serve a young settler on a strange soil, still, under my eye, my poor boy will be at once more prudent and more persevering. We sail next week."

Faber spoke so cheerfully that I knew not how to express compassion ; yet, at his age, after a career of such prolonged and distinguished labour, to resign the ease and comforts of the civilised state for the hardships and rudeness of an infant colony, seemed to me a dreary prospect ; and, as delicately, as tenderly as I could to one whom I loved and honoured as a father, I placed at his disposal the fortune which, in great part, I owed to him,—pressing him at least to take from it enough to secure to himself, in his own country, a home suited to his years and worthy of his station. He rejected all my offers, however earnestly urged on him, with his usual modest and gentle dignity ; and, assuring me that he looked forward with great interest to a residence in lands new to his experience, and affording ample scope for the hardy enjoyments which had always most allured his tastes, he hastened to change the subject.

“And who, think you, is the admirable helpmate my scapegrace has had the saving good-luck to find? A daughter of the worthy man who undertook the care of poor Dr Lloyd’s orphans—the orphans who owed so much to your generous exertions to secure a provision for them; and that child, now just risen from her father’s grave, is my pet companion, my darling ewe-lamb—Dr Lloyd’s daughter, Amy.”

Here the child joined us, quickening her pace as she recognised the old man, and nestling to his side as she glanced wistfully towards myself. A winning, candid, lovable child’s face, somewhat melancholy, somewhat more thoughtful than is common to the face of childhood, but calm, intelligent, and ineffably mild. Presently she stole from the old man, and put her hand in mine :

“Are you not the kind gentleman who came to see him that night when he passed away from us, and who, they all say at home, was so good to my brothers and me? Yes, I recollect you now.” And she put her pure face to mine, wooing me to kiss it.

I kind! I good! I—I! Alas! she little knew, little guessed, the wrathful imprecation her father had bequeathed to me that fatal night!

I did not dare to kiss Dr Lloyd’s orphan daughter, but my tears fell over her hand. She took them as signs of pity, and, in her infant thankfulness, silently kissed me.

“Oh, my friend!” I murmured to Faber, “I have much that I yearn to say to you—alone—alone. Come

to my house with me—be at least my guest as long as you stay in this town.”

“Willingly,” said Faber, looking at me more intently than he had done before, and, with the true eye of the practised Healer, at once soft and penetrating.

He rose, took my arm, and whispering a word in the ear of the little girl, she went on before us, turning her head, as she gained the gate, for another look at her father’s grave. As we walked to my house, Julius Faber spoke to me much of this child. Her brothers were all at school; she was greatly attached to his nephew’s wife; she had become yet more attached to Faber himself, though on so short an acquaintance; it had been settled that she was to accompany the emigrants to Australia.

“There,” said he, “the sum, that some munificent but unknown friend of her father has settled on her, will provide her no mean dower for a colonist’s wife, when the time comes for her to bring a blessing to some other hearth than ours.” He went on to say that she had wished to accompany him to L——, in order to visit her father’s grave before crossing the wide seas; “and she has taken such fond care of me all the way, that you might fancy I were the child of the two. I come back to this town, partly to dispose of a few poor houses in it which still belong to me, principally to bid you farewell before quitting the Old World, no doubt for ever. So, on arriving to-day, I left Amy by herself in the churchyard while I went to your house, but you were from home. And now I must congratu-

late you on the reputation you have so rapidly acquired, which has even surpassed my predictions."

"You are aware," said I, falteringly, "of the extraordinary charge from which that part of my reputation dearest to all men has just emerged?"

He had but seen a short account in a weekly journal, written after my release. He asked details, which I postponed.

Reaching my home, I hastened to provide for the comfort of my two unexpected guests; strove to rally myself—to be cheerful. Not till night, when Julius Faber and I were alone together, did I touch on what was weighing at my heart. Then, drawing to his side, I told him all;—all of which the substance is herein written, from the death-scene in Dr Lloyd's chamber to the hour in which I had seen Dr Lloyd's child at her father's grave. Some of the incidents and conversations which had most impressed me, I had already committed to writing, in the fear that, otherwise, my fancy might forge for its own thralldom the links of reminiscence which my memory might let fall from its chain. Faber listened with a silence only interrupted by short pertinent questions, and when I had done he remained thoughtful for some moments; then the great physician replied thus:—

"I take for granted your conviction of the reality of all you tell me, even of the Luminous Shadow, of the bodiless Voice; but, before admitting the reality itself, we must abide by the old maxim, not to accept as cause to effect those agencies which belong to the Mar-

vellous, when causes less improbable for the effect can be rationally conjectured. In this case are there not such causes? Certainly there are."

"There are?"

"Listen; you are one of those men who attempt to stifle their own imagination. But in all completed intellect, imagination exists, and will force its way; deny it healthful vents, and it may stray into morbid channels. The death-room of Dr Lloyd deeply impressed your heart, far more than your pride would own. This is clear, from the pains you took to exonerate your conscience, in your generosity to the orphans. As the heart was moved, so was the imagination stirred; and, unaware to yourself, prepared for much that subsequently appealed to it. Your sudden love, conceived in the very grounds of the house so associated with recollections in themselves strange and romantic; the peculiar temperament and nature of the girl to whom your love was attracted; her own visionary beliefs, and the keen anxiety which infused into your love a deeper poetry of sentiment—all insensibly tended to induce the imagination to dwell on the Wonderful; and, in overstriving to reconcile each rarer phenomenon to the most positive laws of Nature, your very intellect could discover no solution but in the Preternatural.

"You visit a man who tells you he has seen Sir Philip Derval's ghost: on that very evening you hear a strange story, in which Sir Philip's name is mixed up with a tale of murder, implicating two mysterious pretenders to magic—Louis Grayle, and the Sage of

Aleppo. The tale so interests your fancy that even the glaring impossibility of a not unimportant part of it escapes your notice—viz., the account of a criminal trial in which the circumstantial evidence was more easily attainable than in all the rest of the narrative, but which could not legally have taken place as told. Thus it is whenever the mind begins, unconsciously, to admit the shadow of the Supernatural; the Obvious is lost to the eye that plunges its gaze into the Obscure. Almost immediately afterwards you become acquainted with a young stranger, whose traits of character interest and perplex, attract yet revolt you. All this time you are engaged in a physiological work that severely tasks the brain, and in which you examine the intricate question of soul distinct from mind.

“And, here, I can conceive a cause deep-hid amongst what metaphysicians would call latent associations, for a train of thought which disposed you to accept the fantastic impressions afterwards made on you by the scene in the Museum and the visionary talk of Sir Philip Derval. Doubtless when, at college, you first studied metaphysical speculation, you would have glanced over Beattie’s ‘Essay on Truth’ as one of the works written in opposition to your favourite, David Hume.”

“Yes, I read the book, but I have long since forgotten its arguments.”

“Well, in that essay, Beattie* cites the extraordinary instance of Simon Browne, a learned and pious clergy-

* Beattie’s ‘Essay on Truth,’ part i. c. ii. 3. The story of Simon Browne is to be found in ‘The Adventurer.’

man, who seriously disbelieved the existence of his own soul; and imagined that, by interposition of Divine power, his soul was annulled, and nothing left but a principle of animal life, which he held in common with the brutes! When, years ago, a thoughtful imaginative student, you came on that story, probably enough you would have paused, revolved in your own mind and fancy what kind of a creature a man might be, if, retaining human life and merely human understanding, he was deprived of the powers and properties which reasoners have ascribed to the existence of soul. Something in this young man, unconsciously to yourself, revives that forgotten train of meditative ideas. His dread of death as the final cessation of being, his brutelike want of sympathy with his kind, his incapacity to comprehend the motives which carry man on to scheme and to build for a future that extends beyond his grave, all start up before you at the very moment your reason is overtasked, your imagination fevered, in seeking the solution of problems which, to a philosophy based upon your system, must always remain insoluble. The young man's conversation not only thus excites your fancies, it disturbs your affections. He speaks not only of drugs that renew youth, but of charms that secure love. You tremble for your Lilian while you hear him! And the brain thus tasked, the imagination thus inflamed, the heart thus agitated, you are presented to Sir Philip Derval, whose ghost your patient had supposed he saw weeks ago.

“This person, a seeker after an occult philosophy,

which had possibly acquainted him with some secrets in nature beyond the pale of our conventional experience, though, when analysed, they might prove to be quite reconcilable with sober science, startles you with an undefined mysterious charge against the young man who had previously seemed to you different from ordinary mortals. In a room stored with the dead things of the brute soulless world, your brain becomes intoxicated with the fumes of some vapour which produces effects not uncommon in the superstitious practices of the East; your brain, thus excited, brings distinctly before you the vague impressions it had before received. Margrave becomes identified with the Louis Grayle, of whom you had previously heard an obscure and legendary tale, and all the anomalies in his character are explained by his being that which you had contended, in your physiological work, it was quite possible for man to be—viz., mind and body without soul! You were startled by the monster which man would be were your own theory possible; and in order to reconcile the contradictions in this very monster, you account for knowledge and for powers that mind without soul could not have attained, by ascribing to this prodigy broken memories of a former existence, demon attributes from former proficiency in evil magic. My friend, there is nothing here which your own study of morbid idiosyncrasies should not suffice to solve."

"So then," said I, "you would reduce all that have affected my senses as realities into the deceit of illusions? But," I added, in a whisper, terrified by my

own question, "do not physiologists agree in this—viz., that though illusory phantasms may haunt the sane as well as the insane, the sane know that they are only illusions, and the insane do not?"

"Such a distinction," answered Faber, "is far too arbitrary and rigid for more than a very general and qualified acceptance. Müller, indeed, who is, perhaps, the highest authority on such a subject, says, with prudent reserve, 'When a person who is not insane sees spectres and believes them to be real, his intellect must be imperfectly exercised.'*" He would, indeed, be a bold physician who maintained that every man who believed he had really seen a ghost was of unsound mind. In Dr Abercrombie's interesting account of spectral illusions, he tells us of a servant-girl who believed she saw, at the foot of her bed, the apparition of Curran, in a sailor's jacket and an immense pair of whiskers.† No doubt the spectre was an illusion, and Dr Abercrombie very ingeniously suggests the association of ideas by which the apparition was conjured up with the grotesque adjuncts of the jacket and the whiskers; but the servant-girl, in believing the reality of the apparition, was certainly not insane. When I read in the American public journals‡ of 'spirit mani-

* Müller's 'Physiology of the Senses,' p. 394.

† Abercrombie on the 'Intellectual Powers,' p. 281. (15th edition.)

‡ At the date of Faber's conversation with Allen Fenwick, the (so-called) spirit manifestations had not spread from America over Europe. But if they had, Faber's views would, no doubt, have remained the same.

festations,' in which large numbers of persons of at least the average degree of education, declare that they have actually witnessed various phantasms, much more extraordinary than all which you have confided to me, and arrive, at once, at the conclusion that they are thus put into direct communication with departed souls, I must assume that they are under an illusion, but I should be utterly unwarranted in supposing that, because they credited that illusion, they were insane. I should only say with Müller, that in their reasoning on the phenomena presented to them, 'their intellect was imperfectly exercised.' And an impression made on the senses, being in itself sufficiently rare to excite our wonder, may be strengthened till it takes the form of a positive fact, by various coincidences which are accepted as corroborative testimony, yet which are, nevertheless, nothing more than coincidences found in everyday matters of business, but only emphatically noticed when we can exclaim, 'How astonishing!' In your case such coincidences have been, indeed, very signal, and might well aggravate the perplexities into which your reason was thrown. Sir Philip Derval's murder, the missing casket, the exciting nature of the manuscript, in which a superstitious interest is already enlisted by your expectation to find in it the key to the narrator's boasted powers, and his reasons for the astounding denunciation of the man whom you suspect to be his murderer—in all this there is much to confirm, nay, to cause, an illusion; and for that very reason, when examined by strict laws of evidence, in

all this there is but additional proof that the illusion was — only illusion. Your affections contribute to strengthen your fancy in its war on your reason. The girl you so passionately love develops, to your disquietude and terror, the visionary temperament which, at her age, is ever liable to fantastic caprices. She hears Margrave's song, which, you say, has a wildness of charm that affects and thrills even you. Who does not know the power of music? and of all music, there is none so potential as that of the human voice. Thus, in some languages, charm and song are identical expressions; and even when a critic in our own sober newspapers extols a Malibran or a Grisi, you may be sure that he will call her 'enchantress.' Well, this lady, your betrothed, in whom the nervous system is extremely impressionable, hears a voice, which, even to your ear, is strangely melodious, and sees a form and face which, even to your eye, are endowed with a singular character of beauty. Her fancy is impressed by what she thus hears and sees; and impressed the more, because, by a coincidence not very uncommon, a face like that which she beholds has before been presented to her in a dream or a reverie. In the nobleness of genuine, confiding, reverential love, rather than impute to your beloved a levity of sentiment that would seem to you a treason, you accept the chimera of 'magical fascination.' In this frame of mind you sit down to read the memoir of a mystical enthusiast. Do you begin now to account for the Luminous Shadow? A dream! And a dream no less because

your eyes were open and you believed yourself awake. The diseased imagination resembles those mirrors which, being themselves distorted, represent distorted pictures as correct.

“And even this Memoir of Sir Philip Derval’s ;— can you be quite sure that you actually read the part which relates to Haroun and Louis Grayle? You say that, while perusing the manuscript, you saw the Luminous Shadow and became insensible. The old woman says you were fast asleep. May you not really have fallen into a slumber, and in that slumber have dreamed the parts of the tale that relate to Grayle? dreamed that you beheld the Shadow? Do you remember what is said so well by Dr Abercrombie, to authorise the explanation I suggest to you : ‘A person under the influence of some strong mental impression falls asleep for a few seconds, perhaps without being sensible of it: some scene or person appears in a dream, and he starts up under the conviction that it was a spectral appearance.’ ”*

* Abercrombie ‘On the Intellectual Powers,’ p. 278 (15th edition). This author, not more to be admired for his intelligence than his candour, and who is entitled to praise for a higher degree of original thought than that to which he modestly pretends, relates a curious anecdote illustrating “the analogy between dreaming and spectral illusion, which he received from the gentleman to which it occurred—an eminent medical friend:” “Having sat up late one evening, under considerable anxiety for one of his children, who was ill, he fell asleep in his chair, and had a frightful dream, in which the prominent figure was an immense baboon. He awoke with the fright, got up instantly, and walked to a table which was in the middle of the room. He was then quite awake, and quite conscious of the articles around him; but close by the wall in the end of the

"But," said I, "the apparition was seen by me again, and when, certainly, I was not sleeping."

"True; and who should know better than a physician so well read as yourself that a spectral illusion once beheld is *always apt to return again in the same form?* Thus, Goethe was long haunted by one image; the phantom of a flower unfolding itself, and developing new flowers.* Thus, one of our most distinguished philosophers tells us of a lady known to himself, who would see her husband, hear him move and speak, when he was not even in the house.† But instances of the facility with which phantasms, once admitted, repeat themselves to the senses, are numberless. Many are recorded by Hibbert and Abercrombie, and every physician in extensive practice can add largely, from his own experience, to the list. Intense self-concentration is, in itself, a mighty magician. The magicians of the East inculcate the necessity of fast, solitude, and meditation for the due development of their imaginary powers. And I have no doubt with effect; because fast, solitude, and meditation — in

apartment he distinctly saw the baboon making the same grimaces which he had seen in his dream; and this spectre continued visible for about half a minute." Now, a man who saw only a baboon would be quite ready to admit that it was but an optical illusion; but if, instead of a baboon, he had seen an intimate friend, and that friend, by some coincidence of time, had died about that date, he would be a very strong-minded man if he admitted for the mystery of seeing his friend, the same natural solution which he would readily admit for seeing a baboon.

* See Müller's observations on this phenomenon, 'Physiology of the Senses,' Baley's translation, p. 1395.

† Sir David Brewster's 'Letters on Natural Magic,' p. 39.

other words, thought or fancy intensely concentrated, will both raise apparitions and produce the invoker's belief in them. Spinello, striving to conceive the image of Lucifer for his picture of the Fallen Angels, was at last actually haunted by the Shadow of the Fiend. Newton himself has been subjected to a phantom, though to him, Son of Light, the spectre presented was that of the sun ! You remember the account that Newton gives to Locke of this visionary appearance. He says that, 'though he had looked at the sun with his right eye only, and *not* with the left, yet his fancy began to make an impression upon his left eye as well as his right, for if he shut his right and looked upon the clouds, or a book, or any bright object with his left eye, he could see the sun almost as plain as with the right, if he did but *intend* his fancy a little while on it ;' nay, 'for some months after, as often as he began to meditate on the phenomena, the spectrum of the sun began to return, even though he lay in bed at midnight, with his curtains drawn !' Seeing, then, how any vivid impression once made will recur, what wonder that you should behold in your prison the Shining Shadow that had first startled you in a wizard's chamber when poring over the records of a murdered visionary ? The more minutely you analyse your own hallucinations — pardon me the word — the more they assume the usual characteristics of a dream ; contradictory, illogical, even in the marvels they represent. Can any two persons be more totally unlike each other, not merely as to form and

years, but as to all the elements of character, than the Grayle of whom you read, or believe you read, and the Margrave in whom you evidently think that Grayle is existent still? The one represented, you say, as gloomy, saturnine, with vehement passions, but with an original grandeur of thought and will, consumed by an internal remorse; the other you paint to me as a joyous and wayward darling of Nature, acute, yet frivolous, free from even the ordinary passions of youth, taking delight in innocent amusements, incapable of continuous study, without a single pang of repentance for the crimes you so fancifully impute to him. And now, when your suspicions, so romantically conceived, are dispelled by positive facts—now, when it is clear that Margrave neither murdered Sir Philip Derval nor abstracted the memoir—you still, unconsciously to yourself, draw on your imagination in order to excuse the suspicion your pride of intellect declines to banish, and suppose that this youthful sorcerer tempted the madman to the murder, the woman to the theft——”

“ But you forget the madman said ‘ that he was led on by the Luminous Shadow of a beautiful youth,’ that the woman said also that she was impelled by some mysterious agency.”

“ I do not forget those coincidences; but how your learning would dismiss them as nugatory were your imagination not disposed to exaggerate them! When you read the authentic histories of any popular illusion, such as the spurious inspirations of the Jansenist Con-

vulsionaries, the apparitions that invaded convents, as deposed in the trial of Urbain Grandier, the confessions of witches and wizards in places the most remote from each other, or, at this day, the tales of 'spirit-manifestation' recorded in half the towns and villages of America—do not all the superstitious impressions of a particular time have a common family likeness? What one sees another sees, though there has been no communication between the two. I cannot tell you why these phantasms thus partake of the nature of an atmospheric epidemic; the fact remains incontestable. And strange as may be the coincidence between your impressions of a mystic agency and those of some other brains not cognisant of the chimeras of your own, still, is it not simpler philosophy to say, 'They are coincidences of the same nature which made witches in the same epoch all tell much the same story of the broomsticks they rode and the *sabbats* at which they danced to the fiend's piping,' and there leave the matter, as in science we must leave many of the most elementary and familiar phenomena inexplicable as to their causes—is not this, I say, more philosophical than to insist upon an explanation which accepts the supernatural rather than leave the extraordinary unaccounted for?"

"As you speak," said I, resting my downcast face upon my hand, "I should speak to any patient who had confided to me the tale I have told to you."

"And yet the explanation does not wholly satisfy you? Very likely: to some phenomena there is, as yet, no explanation. Perhaps Newton himself could

not explain quite to his own satisfaction why he was haunted at midnight by the spectrum of a sun; though I have no doubt that some later philosopher, whose ingenuity has been stimulated by Newton's account, has by this time suggested a rational solution of that enigma.* To return to your own case. I have offered

* Newton's explanation is as follows:—"This story I tell you to let you understand, that in the observation related by Mr Boyle, the man's fancy probably concurred with the impression made by the sun's light to produce that phantasm of the sun which he constantly saw in bright objects, and so your question about the cause of this phantasm *involves another about the power of the fancy, which I must confess is too hard a knot for me to untie.* To place this effect in a constant motion is hard, because the sun ought then to appear perpetually. It seems rather to consist in a disposition of the sensorium to move the imagination strongly, and to be easily moved both by the imagination and by the light as often as bright objects are looked upon."—*Letter from Sir I. Newton to Locke, Lord King's Life of Locke*, vol. i. pp. 405-8.

Dr Roget ('Animal and Vegetable Physiology considered with reference to Natural Theology,' Bridgewater Treatise, pp. 524, 525) thus refers to this phenomenon, which he states "all of us may experience:"—

"When the impressions are very vivid" (Dr Roget is speaking of visual impressions), "another phenomenon often takes place, namely, *their subsequent recurrence after a certain interval, during which they are not felt, and quite independently of any renewed application of the cause which had originally excited them.*" (I mark by italics the words which more precisely coincide with Julius Faber's explanations.) "If, for example, we look steadfastly at the sun for a second or two, and then immediately close our eyes, the image or spectrum of the sun remains for a long time present to the mind, as if the light were still acting on the retina. It then gradually fades and disappears; but if we continue to keep the eyes shut, the *same impression will, after a certain time, recur, and again vanish*: and this phenomenon will be repeated at intervals, the sensation becoming fainter at each renewal. It is probable that these reappearances of the image, after the light which produced the original impression has been withdrawn, are occasioned by

such interpretations of the mysteries that confound you, as appear to me authorised by physiological science. Should you adduce other facts which physiological science wants the data to resolve into phenomena always natural, however rare, still hold fast to that simple saying of Goethe's,—‘Mysteries are not necessarily miracles.’ And, if all which physiological science

spontaneous affections of the retina itself which are conveyed to the sensorium. In other cases, where the impressions are less strong, the physical changes producing these changes are perhaps confined to the sensorium.”

It may be said that there is this difference between the spectrum of the sun and such a phantom as that which perplexed Allen Fenwick—viz., that the sun has been actually beheld before its visionary appearance can be reproduced, and that Allen Fenwick only imagines he has seen the apparition which repeats itself to his fancy. “But there are grounds for the suspicion” (says Dr Hibbert, ‘Philosophy of Apparitions,’ p. 250), “*that when ideas of vision are revived to the height of sensation, a corresponding affection of the optic nerve accompanies the illusion.*” Müller (‘Physiology of the Senses,’ p. 1392, Baley’s translation) states the same opinion still more strongly; and Sir David Brewster, quoted by Dr Hibbert (p. 251), says: “In examining these mental impressions, I have found that they follow the motions of the eyeball exactly like the spectral impressions of luminous objects, and that they resemble them also in their apparent immobility when the eye is displaced by an external force. If this result (which I state with much diffidence, from having only my own experience in its favour) shall be found generally true by others, it will follow that *the objects of mental contemplation may be seen as distinctly as external objects, and will occupy the same local position in the axis of vision as if they had been formed by the agency of light.* Hence the impression of an image once conveyed to the senses, no matter how, whether by actual or illusory vision, is liable to renewal, “independently of any renewed application of the cause which had originally excited it,” and the image can be seen in that renewal “as distinctly as external objects,” for indeed “the revival of the fantastic figure really does affect those points of the retina which had been previously impressed.”

comprehends in its experience wholly fails us, I may then hazard certain conjectures, which by acknowledging, ignorance is compelled to recognise the Marvellous —(for as where knowledge enters the Marvellous recedes, so where knowledge falters the Marvellous advances)—yet still, even in those conjectures, I will distinguish the Marvellous from the Supernatural. But, for the present, I advise you to accept the guess that may best quiet the fevered imagination which any bolder guess would only more excite.”

“You are right,” said I, rising proudly to the full height of my stature, my head erect and my heart defying. “And so let this subject be renewed no more between us. I will brood over it no more myself. I regain the unclouded realm of my human intelligence ; and, in that intelligence, I mock the sorcerer and disdain the spectre.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

JULIUS FABER and Amy Lloyd stayed in my house three days, and in their presence I felt a healthful sense of security and peace. Amy wished to visit her father's house, and I asked Faber, in taking her there, to seize the occasion to see Lilian, that he might communicate to me his impression of a case so peculiar. I prepared Mrs Ashleigh for this visit by a previous note. When the old man and the child came back, both brought me comfort. Amy was charmed with Lilian, who had received her with the sweetness natural to her real character, and I loved to hear Lilian's praise from those innocent lips.

Faber's report was still more calculated to console me :—

“I have seen, I have conversed with her long and familiarly. You were quite right, there is no tendency to consumption in that exquisite, if delicate, organisation ; nor do I see cause for the fear to which your statement had pre-inclined me. That head is too nobly formed for any constitutional cerebral infirmity. In its organisation, ideality, wonder, veneration are

large, it is true, but they are balanced by other organs, now perhaps almost dormant, but which will come into play as life passes from romance into duty. Something at this moment evidently oppresses her mind. In conversing with her, I observe abstraction—listlessness; but I am so convinced of her truthfulness, that if she has once told you she returned your affection, and pledged to you her faith, I should, in your place, rest perfectly satisfied that whatever be the cloud that now rests on her imagination, and for the time obscures the idea of yourself, it will pass away.”

Faber was a believer in the main divisions of phrenology, though he did not accept all the dogmas of Gall and Spurzheim; while, to my mind, the refutation of phrenology in its fundamental propositions had been triumphantly established by the lucid arguments of Sir W. Hamilton.* But when Faber rested on phrenological observations, assurances in honour of Lilian, I forgot Sir W. Hamilton, and believed in phrenology. As iron girders and pillars expand and contract with the mere variations of temperature, so will the strongest conviction on which the human intellect rests its judgment, vary with the changes of the human heart; and the building is only safe where these variations are foreseen and allowed for by a wisdom intent on self-knowledge.†

* The summary of this distinguished lecturer's objections to phrenology is to be found in the Appendix to vol. i. of ‘Lectures on Metaphysics,’ p. 404 *et seq.*, edition 1859.

† The change of length in iron girders caused by variation of temperature, has not unfrequently brought down the whole edifice

There was much in the affection that had sprung up between Julius Faber and Amy Lloyd which touched my heart and softened all its emotions. This man, unblessed, like myself, by conjugal and parental ties, had, in his solitary age, turned for solace to the love of a child, as I, in the prime of manhood, had turned to the love of woman. But his love was without fear, without jealousy, without trouble. My sunshine came to me, in a fitful ray, through clouds that had gathered over my noon ; his sunshine covered all his landscape, hallowed, and hallowing, by the calm of declining day.

And Amy was no common child. She had no exuberant imagination ; she was haunted by no whispers from Afar ; she was a creature fitted for the earth—to accept its duties and to gladden its cares. Her tender observation, fine and tranquil, was alive to all the important household trifles by which, at the earliest age, man's allotted soother asserts her privilege to tend and to comfort. It was pleasant to see her moving so noiselessly through the rooms I had devoted to her venerable protector, knowing all his simple wants, and providing for them as if by the mechanism of a heart exquisitely moulded to the loving uses of life. Sometimes when I saw her setting his chair by the window (knowing, as I did, how much he habitually loved to be near the light) and smoothing his papers (in which

into which they were admitted. Good engineers and architects allow for such changes produced by temperature. In the tubular bridge across the Menai Straits, a self-acting record of the daily amount of its contraction and expansion is ingeniously contrived.

he was apt to be unmethodical), placing the mark in his book when he ceased to read, divining, almost without his glance, some wish passing through his mind, and then seating herself at his feet, often with her work—which was always destined for him or for one of her absent brothers—now and then with the one small book that she had carried with her, a selection of Bible stories compiled for children;—sometimes when I saw her thus, how I wished that Lilian, too, could have seen her, and have compared her own ideal phantasies with those young developments of the natural heavenly Woman!

But was there nothing in that sight from which I, proud of my arid reason even in its perplexities, might have taken lessons for myself?

On the second evening of Faber's visit I brought to him the draft of deeds for the sale of his property. He had never been a man of business out of his profession; he was impatient to sell his property, and disposed to accept an offer at half its value. I insisted on taking on myself the task of negotiator; perhaps, too, in this office I was egotistically anxious to prove to the great physician that that which he believed to be my "hallucination" had in no way obscured my common sense in the daily affairs of life. So I concluded, and in a few hours, terms for his property that were only just, but were infinitely more advantageous than had appeared to himself to be possible. But, as I approached him with the papers, he put his finger to his lips. Amy was standing by him with her little

book in her hand, and his own Bible lay open on the table. He was reading to her from the Sacred Volume itself, and impressing on her the force and beauty of one of the Parables, the adaptation of which had perplexed her; when he had done, she kissed him, bade him good-night, and went away to rest. Then said Faber thoughtfully, and as if to himself more than me—

“What a lovely bridge between old age and childhood is religion! How intuitively the child begins with prayer and worship on entering life, and how intuitively on quitting life the old man turns back to prayer and worship, putting himself again side by side with the infant!”

I made no answer, but, after a pause, spoke of fines and freeholds, title-deeds and money; and when the business on hand was concluded, asked my learned guest if, before he departed, he would deign to look over the pages of my ambitious Physiological Work. There were parts of it on which I much desired his opinion, touching on subjects in which his special studies made him an authority as high as our land possessed.

He made me bring him the manuscript, and devoted much of that night and the next day to its perusal.

When he gave it me back, which was not till the morning of his departure, he commenced with eulogies on the scope of its design and the manner of its execution, which flattered my vanity so much that I could not help exclaiming, “Then, at least, there is no trace of ‘hallucination’ here!”

“Alas ! my poor Allen ! here, perhaps, hallucination, or self-deception, is more apparent than in all the strange tales you confided to me. For here is the hallucination of the man seated on the shores of Nature, and who would say to its measureless sea, ‘So far shalt thou go, and no farther ;’—here is the hallucination of the creature, who, not content with exploring the laws of the Creator, ends with submitting to his interpretation of some three or four laws, in the midst of a code of which all the rest are in language unknown to him, the powers and free-will of the Lawgiver Himself ; here is the hallucination by which Nature is left Godless—because Man is left soulless. What would matter all our speculations on a Deity who would cease to exist for us when we are in the grave ? Why mete out, like Archytas, the earth and the sea, and number the sands on the shore that divides them, if the end of this wisdom be a handful of dust sprinkled over a skull !

‘Nec quidquam tibi prodest
Aeris tentasse domos *animoque* rotundum
Percurrisse polum *morituro.*’

Your book is a proof of the soul that you fail to discover. Without a soul, no man would work for the Future that begins for his fame when the breath is gone from his body. Do you remember how you saw that little child praying at the grave of her father ? Shall I tell you that in her simple orisons she prayed for the benefactor—who had cared for the orphan ; who had reared over dust that tomb which, in a Chris-

tian burial-ground, is a mute but perceptible memorial of Christian hopes—that the child prayed, haughty man, for you? And you sat by, knowing nought of this; sat by, amongst the graves, troubled and tortured with ghastly doubts—vain of a reason that was sceptical of eternity, and yet shaken like a reed by a moment's marvel. Shall I tell the child to pray for you no more?—that you disbelieve in a soul? If you do so, what is the efficacy of prayer? Speak—shall I tell her this? Shall the infant pray for you never more?”

I was silent—I was thrilled.

“Has it never occurred to you, who, in denying all innate perceptions as well as ideas, have passed on to deductions from which poor Locke, humble Christian that he was, would have shrunk in dismay; has it never occurred to you as a wonderful fact, that the easiest thing in the world to teach a child is that which seems to metaphysical schoolmen the abstrusest of all problems? Read all those philosophers wrangling about a First Cause, deciding on what *are* miracles, and then again deciding that such miracles cannot be; and when one has answered another, and left in the crucible of wisdom a *caput mortuum* of ignorance, then turn your eyes, and look at the infant praying to the invisible God at his mother's knees. This idea, so miraculously abstract, of a Power that the infant has never seen, that cannot be symbolled forth and explained to him by the most erudite sage,—a Power, nevertheless, that watches over him, that hears him, that sees him, that will carry him across the grave,

that will enable him to live on for ever ;—this double mystery of a Divinity and of a Soul the infant learns with the most facile readiness, at the first glimpse of his reasoning faculty. Before you can teach him a rule in addition, before you can venture to drill him into his hornbook, he leaps with one intuitive spring of all his ideas, to the comprehension of the truths which are only incomprehensible to blundering sages ! And you, as you stand before me, *dare* not say, ‘ Let the child pray for me no more ! ’ But will the Creator accept the child’s prayer for the man who refuses prayer for himself ? Take my advice—Pray ! And in this counsel I do not overstep my province. I speak not as a preacher, but as a physician. For health is a word that comprehends our whole organisation, and a just equilibrium of all faculties and functions is the condition of health. As in your Lilian, the equilibrium is deranged by the over-indulgence of a spiritual mysticism which withdraws from the nutriment of duty the essential pabulum of sober sense, so in you, the resolute negation of disciplined spiritual communion between Thought and Divinity robs imagination of its noblest and safest vent. Thus, from opposite extremes, you and your Lilian meet in the same region of mist and cloud, losing sight of each other and of the true ends of life, as her eyes only gaze on the stars and yours only bend to the earth. Were I advising *her*, I should say : ‘ Your Creator has placed the scene of your trial below, and not in the stars.’ Advising *you*, I say : ‘ But in the trial below, man should recognise education

for heaven.' In a word, I would draw somewhat more downward her fancy, raise somewhat more upward your reason. Take my advice then—Pray. Your mental system needs the support of prayer in order to preserve its balance. In the embarrassment and confusion of your senses, clearness of perception will come with habitual and tranquil confidence in Him who alike rules the universe and reads the heart. I only say here what has been said much better before by a reasoner in whom all students of Nature recognise a guide. I see on your table the very volume of Bacon which contains the passage I commend to your reflection. Here it is. Listen : 'Take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man who, to him, is instead of a God, or *melior natura*; which courage is manifestly such as that creature, without that confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human nature could not obtain.'* You are silent, but your gesture tells me your doubt—a doubt which your heart, so femininely tender, will not speak aloud lest you should rob the old man of a hope with which your strength of manhood dispenses—you doubt the efficacy of prayer ! Pause and reflect, bold but candid inquirer

* Bacon's 'Essay on Atheism.' This quotation is made with admirable felicity and force by Dr Whewell, page 378 of Bridgewater Treatise on 'Astronomy and General Physics considered with reference to Natural Theology.'

into the laws of that guide you call Nature. If there were no efficacy in prayer—if prayer were as mere an illusion of superstitious phantasy as aught against which your reason now struggles—do you think that Nature herself would have made it amongst the most common and facile of all her dictates? Do you believe that if there really did not exist that tie between Man and his Maker—that link between life here and life hereafter which is found in what we call Soul, alone—that wherever you look through the universe, you would behold a child at prayer? Nature inculcates nothing that is superfluous. Nature does not impel the leviathan or the lion, the eagle or the moth, to pray; she impels only man. Why? Because man only has soul, and Soul seeks to commune with the Everlasting, as a fountain struggles up to its source. Burn your book. It would found you a reputation for learning and intellect and courage, I allow; but learning and intellect and courage wasted against a truth—like spray against a rock! A truth valuable to the world, the world will never part with. You will not injure the truth, but you will mislead and may destroy many, whose best security is in the truth which you so eruditely insinuate to be a fable. Soul and Hereafter are the heritage of all men; the humblest journeyman in those streets, the pettiest trader behind those counters, have in those beliefs their prerogatives of royalty. You would dethrone and embrate the lords of the earth by your theories. For my part, having given the greater part of my life to the study and analysis of facts, I would

rather be the author of the tritest homily, or the baldest poem, that inculcated that imperishable essence of the soul to which I have neither scalpel nor probe, than be the founder of the subtlest school, or the framer of the loftiest verse, that robbed my fellow-men of their faith in a spirit that eludes the dissecting-knife—in a being that escapes the gravedigger. Burn your book—Accept This Book instead ; Read and Pray.”

He placed his Bible in my hand, embraced me, and an hour afterwards the old man and the child left my hearth solitary once more.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THAT night as I sat in my study, very thoughtful and very mournful, I revolved all that Julius Faber had said ; and the impression his words had produced became gradually weaker and weaker, as my reason, naturally combative, rose up with all the replies which my philosophy suggested. No ; if my imagination had really seduced and betrayed me into monstrous credulities, it was clear that the best remedy to such morbid tendencies towards the Superstitious was in the severe exercise of the faculties most opposed to Superstition—in the culture of pure reasoning—in the science of absolute fact. Accordingly I placed before me the very book which Julius Faber had advised me to burn ; I forced all my powers of mind to go again over the passages which contained the doctrines that his admonition had censured ; and before daybreak, I had stated the substance of his argument, and the logical reply to it, in an elaborate addition to my chapter on “ Sentimental Philosophers.” While thus rejecting the purport of his parting counsels, I embodied in another portion of my work his views on my own “ illusions,” and as here my common sense was in concord with his, I disposed of all

my own previous doubts in an addition to my favourite chapter "On the Cheats of the Imagination." And when the pen dropped from my hand, and the day-star gleamed through the window, my heart escaped from the labour of my mind and flew back to the image of Lilian. The pride of the philosopher died out of me, the sorrow of the man reigned supreme, and I shrank from the coming of the sun, despondent.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Not till the law had completed its proceedings, and satisfied the public mind as to the murder of Sir Philip Derval, were the remains of the deceased consigned to the family mausoleum. The funeral was, as may be supposed, strictly private, and when it was over, the excitement caused by an event so tragical and singular subsided. New topics engaged the public talk, and—in my presence at least—the delicate consideration due to one whose name had been so painfully mixed up in the dismal story, forbore a topic which I could not be expected to hear without distressful emotion. Mrs Ashleigh I saw frequently at my own house ; she honestly confessed that Lilian had not shown that grief at the cancelling of our engagement which would alone justify Mrs Ashleigh in asking me again to see her daughter, and retract my conclusions against our union. She said that Lilian was quiet, not uncheerful, never spoke of me nor of Margrave, but seemed absent and preoccupied as before, taking pleasure in nothing that had been wont to please her ; not in music, nor books, nor that tranquil pastime which women call work, and in which they find excuse to meditate, in idleness, their

own fancies. She rarely stirred out—even in the garden; when she did, her eyes seemed to avoid the house in which Margrave had lodged, and her steps the old favourite haunt by the Monk's Well. She would remain silent for long hours together, but the silence did not appear melancholy. For the rest her health was more than usually good. Still Mrs Ashleigh persisted in her belief that, sooner or later, Lilian would return to her former self, her former sentiments for me; and she entreated me not, as yet, to let the world know that our engagement was broken off. "For if," said she, with good sense, "if it should prove not to be broken off, only suspended, and afterwards happily renewed, there will be two stories to tell when no story be needed. Besides, I should dread the effect on Lilian, if offensive gossips babbled to her on a matter that would excite so much curiosity as the rupture of a union in which our neighbours have taken so general an interest."

I had no reason to refuse acquiescence in Mrs Ashleigh's request, but I did not share in her hopes; I felt that the fair prospects of my life were blasted; I could never love another, never wed another; I resigned myself to a solitary hearth, rejoiced, at least, that Margrave had not revisited at Mrs Ashleigh's—had not, indeed, reappeared in the town. He was still staying with Strahan, who told me that his guest had ensconced himself in Forman's old study, and amused himself with reading—though not for long at a time—the curious old books and manuscripts found in the

library, or climbing trees like a schoolboy, and familiarising himself with the deer and the cattle, which would group round him quite tame, and feed from his hand. Was this the description of a criminal? But if Sir Philip's assertion were really true; if the criminal were man without soul; if without soul, man would have no conscience, never be troubled by repentance, and the vague dread of a future world,—why, then, should not the criminal be gay despite his crimes, as the white bear gambols as friskily after his meal on human flesh? These questions would haunt me, despite my determination to accept as the right solution of all marvels the construction put on my narrative by Julius Faber.

Days passed; I saw and heard nothing of Margrave. I began half to hope that, in the desultory and rapid changes of mood and mind which characterised his restless nature, he had forgotten my existence.

One morning I went out early on my rounds, when I met Strahan unexpectedly.

“I was in search of you,” he said, “for more than one person has told me that you are looking ill and jaded. So you are! And the town now is hot and unhealthy. You must come to Derval Court for a week or so. You can ride into town every day to see your patients. Don't refuse. Margrave, who is still with me, sends all kind messages, and bade me say that *he* entreats you to come to the house at which he also is a guest!”

I started. What had the Scin-Læca required of me,

and obtained to that condition my promise? "If you are asked to the house at which I also am a guest, you will come; you will meet and converse with me as guest speaks to guest in the house of a host!" Was this one of the coincidences which my reason was bound to accept as coincidences, and nothing more? Tut, tut! Was I returning again to my "hallucinations?" Granting that Faber and common sense were in the right, what was this Margrave? A man to whose friendship, acuteness, and energy I was under the deepest obligations—to whom I was indebted for active services that had saved my life from a serious danger, acquitted my honour of a horrible suspicion. "I thank you," I said to Strahan, "I will come; not, indeed, for a week, but, at all events, for a day or two."

"That's right; I will call for you in the carriage at six o'clock. You will have done your day's work by then?"

"Yes; I will so arrange."

On our way to Derval Court that evening, Strahan talked much about Margrave, of whom, nevertheless, he seemed to be growing weary.

"His high spirits are too much for one," said he; "and then so restless—so incapable of sustained quiet conversation. And, clever though he is, he can't help me in the least about the new house I shall build. He has no notion of construction. I don't think he could build a barn."

"I thought you did not like to demolish the old house, and would content yourself with pulling down the more ancient part of it?"

“True. At first it seemed a pity to destroy so handsome a mansion ; but you see since poor Sir Philip’s manuscript, on which he set such store, has been too mutilated, I fear, to allow me to effect his wish with regard to it, I think I ought, at least, scrupulously to obey his other whims. And, besides, I don’t know, there are odd noises about the old house. I don’t believe in haunted houses, still there is something dreary in strange sounds at the dead of night, even if made by rats, or winds through decaying rafters. You, I remember at college, had a taste for architecture, and can draw plans. I wish to follow out Sir Philip’s design, but on a smaller scale, and with more attention to comfort.”

Thus he continued to run on, satisfied to find me a silent and attentive listener. We arrived at the mansion an hour before sunset, the westering light shining full against the many windows cased in mouldering pilasters, and making the general dilapidation of the whole place yet more mournfully evident.

It was but a few minutes to the dinner-hour. I went up at once to the room appropriated to me—not the one I had before occupied. Strahan had already got together a new establishment. I was glad to find in the servant who attended me an old acquaintance. He had been in my own employ when I first settled at L——, and left me to get married. He and his wife were now both in Strahan’s service. He spoke warmly of his new master and his contentment with his situation, while he unpacked my carpet-bag and

assisted me to change my dress. But the chief object of his talk and his praise was Mr Margrave.

“Such a bright young gentleman, like the first fine day in May!”

When I entered the drawing-room, Margrave and Strahan were both there. The former was blithe and genial, as usual, in his welcome. At dinner, and during the whole evening till we retired severally to our own rooms, he was the principal talker; recounting incidents of travel, always very loosely strung together, jesting, good-humouredly enough, at Strahan’s sudden hobby for building, then putting questions to me about mutual acquaintances, but never waiting for an answer; and every now and then, as if at random, startling us with some brilliant aphorism, or some suggestion drawn from abstract science or unfamiliar erudition. The whole effect was sparkling, but I could well understand that, if long continued, it would become oppressive. The soul has need of pauses of repose—intervals of escape, not only from the flesh, but even from the mind. A man of the loftiest intellect will experience times when mere intellect not only fatigues him, but, amidst its most original conceptions, amidst its proudest triumphs, has a something trite and commonplace compared with one of those vague intimations of a spiritual destiny which are not within the ordinary domain of reason; and, gazing abstractedly into space, will leave suspended some problem of severest thought, or uncompleted some golden palace of imperial poetry, to indulge in hazy reveries that do not differ from those

of an innocent quiet child ! The soul has a long road to travel—from time through eternity. It demands its halting hours of contemplation. Contemplation is serene. But with such wants of an immortal immaterial spirit, Margrave had no fellowship, no sympathy ; and for myself, I need scarcely add that the lines I have just traced I should not have written at the date at which my narrative has now arrived.

CHAPTER XLIX.

I HAD no case that necessitated my return to L—— the following day. The earlier hours of the forenoon I devoted to Strahan and his building plans. Margrave flitted in and out of the room, fitfully as an April sunbeam, sometimes flinging himself on a sofa, and reading for a few minutes one of the volumes of the ancient mystics, in which Sir Philip's library was so rich. I remember it was a volume of Proclus. He read that crabbed and difficult Greek with a fluency that surprised me. "I picked up the ancient Greek," said he, "years ago, in learning the modern." But the book soon tired him ; then he would come and disturb us, archly enjoying Strahan's peevishness at interruption ; then he would throw open the window and leap down, chanting one of his wild savage airs ; and in another moment he was half hid under the drooping boughs of a broad lime-tree, amidst the antlers of deer that gathered fondly round him. In the afternoon my host was called away to attend some visitors of importance, and I found myself on the sward before the house, right in view of the mausoleum, and alone with Margrave.

I turned my eyes from that dumb House of Death wherein rested the corpse of the last lord of the soil, so strangely murdered, with a strong desire to speak out to Margrave the doubts respecting himself that tortured me. But—setting aside the promise to the contrary, which I had given, or dreamed I had given, to the Luminous Shadow—to fulfil that desire would have been impossible,—impossible to any one gazing on that radiant youthful face! I think I see him now as I saw him then: a white doe, that even my presence could not scare away from him, clung lovingly to his side, looking up at him with her soft eyes. He stood there like the incarnate principle of mythological sensuous life. I have before applied to him that illustration; let the repetition be pardoned. Impossible, I repeat it, to say to that creature, face to face, “Art thou the master of demoniac arts, and the instigator of secret murder?” As if from redundant happiness within himself, he was humming, or rather cooing, a strain of music, so sweet, so sweet, so wildly sweet, and so unlike the music one hears from tutored lips in crowded rooms! I passed my hand over my forehead in bewilderment and awe.

“Are there,” I said, unconsciously—“are there, indeed, such prodigies in Nature?”

“Nature!” he cried, catching up the word; “talk to me of Nature! Talk of her, the wondrous blissful mother! Mother I may well call her. I am her spoiled child, her darling—— But oh, to die, ever to die, ever to lose sight of Nature!—to rot, senseless,

whether under these turfs or within those dead walls——”

I could not resist the answer—

“Like yon murdered man! murdered, and by whom?”

“By whom? I thought that was clearly proved.”

“The hand was proved; what influence moved the hand?”

“Tush! the poor wretch spoke of a Demon. Who can tell? Nature herself is a grand destroyer. See that pretty bird, in its beak a writhing worm! All Nature’s children live to take life; none, indeed, so lavishly as man. What hecatombs slaughtered, not to satisfy the irresistible sting of hunger, but for the wanton ostentation of a feast, which he may scarcely taste, or for the mere sport that he finds in destroying. We speak with dread of the beasts of prey: what beast of prey is so dire a ravager as man?—so cruel and so treacherous? Look at yon flock of sheep, bred and fattened for the shambles; and this hind that I caress—if I were the park-keeper, and her time for my bullet had come, would you think her life was the safer because, in my own idle whim, I had tamed her to trust to the hand raised to slay her?”

“It is true,” said I,—“a grim truth. Nature, on the surface so loving and so gentle, is full of terror in her deeps when our thought descends into their abyss!”

Strahan now joined us with a party of country visitors.

“Margrave is the man to show you the beauties of

this park," said he. "Margrave knows every bosk and dingle, twisted old thorn-tree, or opening glade, in its intricate, undulating ground."

Margrave seemed delighted at this proposition ; and as he led us through the park, though the way was long, though the sun was fierce, no one seemed fatigued. For the pleasure he felt in pointing out detached beauties which escaped an ordinary eye was contagious. He did not talk as talks the poet or the painter : but at some lovely effect of light amongst the tremulous leaves, some sudden glimpse of a sportive rivulet below, he would halt, point it out to us in silence, and with a kind of childlike ecstacy in his own bright face, that seemed to reflect the life and the bliss of the blithe summer-day itself.

Thus seen, all my doubts in his dark secret nature faded away—all my horror, all my hate ; it was impossible to resist the charm that breathed round him, not to feel a tender, affectionate yearning towards him as to some fair happy child. Well might he call himself the Darling of Nature. Was he not the mysterious likeness of that awful Mother, beautiful as Apollo in one aspect, direful as Typhon in another ?

CHAPTER I.

“WHAT a strange-looking cane you have, sir!” said a little girl, who was one of the party, and who had entwined her arm round Margrave’s. “Let me look at it.”

“Yes,” said Strahan; “that cane, or rather walking-staff, is worth looking at. Margrave bought it in Egypt, and declares that it is very ancient.”

This staff seemed constructed from a reed; looked at, it seemed light, in the hand it felt heavy; it was of a pale, faded yellow, wrought with black rings at equal distances, and graven with half-obliterated characters that seemed hieroglyphic. I remembered to have seen Margrave with it before, but I had never noticed it with any attention till now, when it was passed from hand to hand. At the head of the cane there was a large unpolished stone of a dark blue.

“Is this a pebble or a jewel?” asked one of the party.

“I cannot tell you its name or nature,” said Margrave; “but it is said to cure the bite of serpents,*

* The following description of a stone at Corfu, celebrated as an antidote to the venom of the serpent’s bite, was given to me by an eminent scholar and legal functionary in that island:—

and has other supposed virtues — a talisman, in short.’’

He here placed the staff in my hands, and bade me look at it with care. Then he changed the conversation and renewed the way, leaving the staff with me, till, suddenly, I forced it back on him. I could not

“DESCRIPTION OF THE BLUE STONE.—This stone is of an oval shape, $1\frac{2}{16}$ inch long, $\frac{1}{16}$ broad, $\frac{1}{16}$ thick, and, having been broken formerly, is now set in gold.

“When a person is bitten by a poisonous snake, the bite must be opened by a cut of a lancet or razor longways, and the stone applied within twenty-four hours. The stone then attaches itself firmly on the wound, and when it has done its office falls off; the cure is then complete. The stone must then be thrown into milk, whereupon it vomits the poison it has absorbed, which remains green on the top of the milk, and the stone is then again fit for use.

“This stone has been from time immemorial in the family of Ventura, of Corfu, a house of Italian origin, and is notorious, so that peasants immediately apply for its aid. Its virtue has not been impaired by the fracture. Its nature or composition is unknown.

“In a case where two were stung at the same time by serpents, the stone was applied to one, who recovered; but the other, for whom it could not be used, died.

“It never failed but once, and then it was applied *after* the twenty-four hours.

“Its colour is so dark as not to be distinguished from black.

“P. M. COLQUHOUN.

“CORFU, 7th November 1860.”

Sir Emerson Tennent, in his popular and excellent work on Ceylon, gives an account of “snake-stones” apparently similar to the one at Corfu, except that they are “intensely black and highly polished,” and which are applied, in much the same manner, to the wounds inflicted by the cobra-capella.

Query. Might it not be worth while to ascertain the chemical properties of these stones, and, if they be efficacious in the extraction of venom conveyed by a bite, might they not be as successful if applied to the bite of a mad dog as to that of a cobra-capella?

have explained why, but its touch, as it warmed in my clasp, seemed to send through my whole frame a singular thrill, and a sensation as if I no longer felt my own weight—as if I walked on air.

Our rambles came to a close ; the visitors went away ; I re-entered the house through the sash-window of Forman's study : Margrave threw his hat and staff on the table, and amused himself with examining minutely the tracery on the mantelpiece. Strahan and myself left him thus occupied, and, going into the adjoining library, resumed our task of examining the plans for the new house. I continued to draw outlines and sketches of various alterations, tending to simplify and contract Sir Philip's general design. Margrave soon joined us, and this time took his seat patiently beside our table, watching me use ruler and compass with unwonted attention.

"I wish I could draw," he said : "but I can do nothing useful."

"Rich men like you," said Strahan, peevishly, "can engage others, and are better employed in rewarding good artists than in making bad drawings themselves."

"Yes, I can employ others ; and—Fenwick, when you have finished with Strahan, I will ask permission to employ you, though without reward ; the task I would impose will not take you a minute."

He then threw himself back in his chair, and seemed to fall into a doze.

The dressing-bell rang ; Strahan put away the plans—indeed, they were now pretty well finished and decided on.

Margrave woke up as our host left the room to dress, and, drawing me towards another table in the room, placed before me one of his favourite mystic books, and pointing to an old woodcut, said—

“I will ask you to copy this for me; it pretends to be a fac-simile of Solomon’s famous seal. I have a whimsical desire to have a copy of it. You observe two triangles interlaced and inserted in a circle?—the pentacle, in short. Yes, just so. You need not add the astrological characters; they are the senseless superfluous accessories of the dreamer who wrote the book. But the pentacle itself has an intelligible meaning; it belongs to the only universal language, the language of symbol, in which all races that think—around, and above, and below us—can establish communion of thought. If in the external universe any one constructive principle can be detected, it is the geometrical; and in every part of the world in which magic pretends to a written character, I find that its hieroglyphics are geometrical figures. Is it not laughable that the most positive of all the sciences should thus lend its angles and circles to the use of—what shall I call it?—the ignorance?—ay, that is the word—the ignorance of dealers in magic!”

He took up the paper on which I had hastily described the triangles and the circle, and left the room chanting the serpent-charmer’s song.

CHAPTER LI.

WHEN we separated for the night, which we did at eleven o'clock, Margrave said—

“Good-night and good-bye. I must leave you to-morrow, Strahan, and before your usual hour for rising. I took the liberty of requesting one of your men to order me a chaise from L——. Pardon my seeming abruptness, but I always avoid long leave-takings, and I had fixed the date of my departure almost as soon as I accepted your invitation.”

“I have no right to complain. The place must be dull, indeed, to a gay young fellow like you. It is dull even to me. I am meditating flight already. Are you going back to L——?”

“Not even for such things as I left at my lodgings. When I settle somewhere, and can give an address, I shall direct them to be sent to me. There are, I hear, beautiful patches of scenery towards the north, only known to pedestrian tourists. I am a good walker; and you know, Fenwick, that I am also a child of Nature. Adieu to you both; and many thanks to you, Strahan, for your hospitality.”

He left the room.

"I am not sorry he is going," said Strahan, after a pause, and with a quick breath as if of relief. "Do you not feel that he exhausts one? An excess of oxygen, as you would say in a lecture."

I was alone in my own chamber; I felt indisposed for bed and for sleep: the curious conversation I had held with Margrave weighed on me. In that conversation, we had indirectly touched upon the prodigies which I had not brought myself to speak of with frank courage, and certainly nothing in Margrave's manner had betrayed consciousness of my suspicions; on the contrary, the open frankness with which he evinced his predilection for mystic speculation, or uttered his more unamiable sentiments, rather tended to disarm than encourage belief in gloomy secrets or sinister powers. And as he was about to quit the neighbourhood, he would not again see Lilian, not even enter the town of L——. Was I to ascribe this relief from his presence to the promise of the Shadow, or was I not rather right in battling firmly against any grotesque illusion, and accepting his departure as a simple proof that my jealous fears had been amongst my other chimeras, and that, as he had really only visited Lilian out of friendship to me, in my peril, so he might, with his characteristic acuteness, have guessed my jealousy, and ceased his visits from a kindly motive delicately concealed? And might not the same motive now have dictated the words which were intended to assure me that L—— contained no attractions to tempt him to return to it? Thus, gradually soothed and cheered by

the course to which my reflections led me, I continued to muse for hours. At length, looking at my watch, I was surprised to find it was the second hour after midnight. I was just about to rise from my chair to undress, and secure some hours of sleep, when the well-remembered cold wind passed through the room, stirring the roots of my hair; and before me stood, against the wall, the Luminous Shadow.

“Rise and follow me,” said the voice, sounding much nearer than it had ever done before.

And at those words I rose mechanically, and like a sleep-walker.

“Take up the light.”

I took it.

The Scin-Læca glided along the wall towards the threshold, and motioned me to open the door. I did so. The Shadow flitted on through the corridor. I followed, with hushed footsteps, down a small stair into Forman's study. In all my subsequent proceedings, about to be narrated, the Shadow guided me, sometimes by voice, sometimes by sign. I obeyed the guidance not only unresistingly, but without a desire to resist. I was unconscious either of curiosity or of awe—only of a calm and passive indifference, neither pleasurable nor painful. In this obedience, from which all will seemed extracted, I took into my hands the staff which I had examined the day before, and which lay on the table, just where Margrave had cast it on re-entering the house. I unclosed the shutter to the casement, lifted the sash, and, with the light in

my left hand, the staff in my right, stepped forth into the garden. The night was still ; the flame of the candle scarcely trembled in the air ; the Shadow moved on before me towards the old pavilion described in an earlier part of this narrative, and of which the mouldering doors stood wide open. I followed the Shadow into the pavilion, up the crazy stair to the room above, with its four great blank unglazed windows, or rather arcades, north, south, east, and west. I halted on the middle of the floor : right before my eyes, through the vista made by breathless boughs, stood out from the moonlit air the dreary mausoleum. Then, at the command conveyed to me, I placed the candle on a wooden settle, touched a spring in the handle of the staff, a lid flew back, and I drew from the hollow, first a lump of some dark bituminous substance, next a smaller slender wand of polished steel, of which the point was tipped with a translucent material, which appeared to me like crystal. Bending down, still obedient to the direction conveyed to me, I described on the floor with the lump of bitumen (if I may so call it) the figure of the pentacle with the interlaced triangles, in a circle nine feet in diameter, just as I had drawn it for Margrave the evening before. The material used made the figure perceptible, in a dark colour of mingled black and red. I applied the flame of the candle to the circle, and immediately it became lambent with a low steady splendour that rose about an inch from the floor, and gradually from this light there emanated a soft grey transparent mist and a

faint but exquisite odour. I stood in the midst of the circle, and within the circle also, close by my side, stood the Scin-Læca; no longer reflected on the wall, but apart from it, erect, rounded into more integral and distinct form, yet impalpable, and from it there breathed an icy air. Then lifting the wand, the broader end of which rested in the palm of my hand, the two fore-fingers closing lightly over it in a line parallel with the point, I directed it towards the wide aperture before me, fronting the mausoleum. I repeated aloud some words whispered to me in a language I knew not: those words I would not trace on this paper could I remember them. As they came to a close, I heard a howl from the watch-dog in the yard—a dismal, lugubrious howl. Other dogs in the distant village caught up the sound, and bayed in a dirge-like chorus; and the howling went on louder and louder. Again strange words were whispered to me, and I repeated them in mechanical submission; and when they too were ended, I felt the ground tremble beneath me, and as my eyes looked straight forward down the vista, that, stretching from the casement, was bounded by the solitary mausoleum, vague formless shadows seemed to pass across the moonlight—below, along the sward—above, in the air: and then suddenly a terror, not before conceived, came upon me.

And a third time words were whispered: but, though I knew no more of their meaning than I did of those that had preceded them, I felt a repugnance to utter them aloud. Mutely I turned towards the Scin-

Læca, and the expression of its face was menacing and terrible ; my will became yet more compelled to the control imposed upon it, and my lips commenced the formula again whispered into my ear, when I heard distinctly a voice of warning and of anguish, that murmured "Hold !" I knew the voice ; it was Lilian's. I paused—I turned towards the quarter from which the voice had come, and in the space afar I saw the features, the form of Lilian. Her arms were stretched towards me in supplication, her countenance was deadly pale and anxious with unutterable distress. The whole image seemed in unison with the voice ;—the look, the attitude, the gesture of one who sees another in deadly peril, and cries, "Beware !"

This apparition vanished in a moment ; but that moment sufficed to free my mind from the constraint which had before enslaved it. I dashed the wand to the ground, sprang from the circle, rushed from the place. How I got into my own room I can remember not—I know not ; I have a vague reminiscence of some intervening wanderings, of giant trees, of shroud-like moonlight, of the Shining Shadow and its angry aspect, of the blind walls and the iron door of the House of the Dead, of spectral images—a confused and dreary phantasmagoria. But all I can recall with distinctness is the sight of my own hueless face in the mirror in my own still room, by the light of the white moon through the window ; and sinking down, I said to myself, "This, at least, is an hallucination or a dream !"

CHAPTER LII.

A HEAVY sleep came over me at daybreak, but I did not undress nor go to bed. The sun was high in the heavens when, on waking, I saw the servant who had attended me bustling about the room.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I am afraid I disturbed you ; but I have been three times to see if you were not coming down, and found you so soundly asleep I did not like to wake you. Mr Strahan has finished breakfast, and gone out riding ; Mr Margrave has left—left before six o'clock."

"Ah! he said he was going early."

"Yes, sir ; and he seemed so cross when he went. I could never have supposed so pleasant a gentleman could put himself into such a passion !"

"What was the matter ?"

"Why, his walking-stick could not be found ; it was not in the hall. He said he had left it in the study ; we could not find it there. At last he found it himself in the old summer-house, and said—I beg pardon, he said—'he was sure you had taken it there : that some one, at all events, had been meddling with it.' However, I am very glad it was found, since he seems to set such store on it."

"Did Mr Margrave go himself into the summer-house to look for it?"

"Yes, sir; no one else would have thought of such a place; no one likes to go there, even in the day-time."

"Why?"

"Why, sir, they say it is haunted since poor Sir Philip's death; and, indeed, there are strange noises in every part of the house. I am afraid you had a bad night, sir," continued the servant, with evident curiosity glancing towards the bed, which I had not pressed, and towards the evening-dress, which, while he spoke, I was rapidly changing for that which I habitually wore in the morning. "I hope you did not feel yourself ill?"

"No; but it seems I fell asleep in my chair."

"Did you hear, sir, how the dogs howled about two o'clock in the morning? They woke me. Very frightful!"

"The moon was at her full. Dogs will bay the moon."

I felt relieved to think that I should not find Strahan in the breakfast-room, and, hastening through the ceremony of a meal which I scarcely touched, I went out into the park unobserved, and, creeping round the copses and into the neglected gardens, made my way to the pavilion. I mounted the stairs—I looked on the floor of the upper room; yes, there still was the black figure of the pentacle—the circle. So, then, it was not a dream! Till then I had doubted. Or

might it not still be so far a dream, that I had walked in my sleep, and with an imagination preoccupied by my conversations with Margrave—by the hieroglyphics on the staff I had handled—by the very figure associated with superstitious practices which I had copied from some weird book at his request—by all the strange impressions previously stamped on my mind ;—might I not, in truth, have carried thither in sleep the staff, described the circle, and all the rest been but visionary delusion? Surely—surely, so common sense and so Julius Faber would interpret the riddles that perplexed me! Be that as it may, my first thought was to efface the marks on the floor. I found this easier than I had ventured to hope. I rubbed the circle and the pentacle away from the boards with the sole of my foot, leaving but an undistinguishable smudge behind. I know not why, but I felt the more nervously anxious to remove all such evidences of my nocturnal visit to that room, because Margrave had so openly gone thither to seek for the staff, and had so rudely named me to the servant as having meddled with it. Might he not awake some suspicion against me? Suspicion, what of? I knew not, but I feared!

The healthful air of day gradually nerved my spirits and relieved my thoughts. But the place had become hateful to me. I resolved not to wait for Strahan's return, but to walk back to L——, and leave a message for my host. It was sufficient excuse that I could not longer absent myself from my patients; accordingly, I gave directions to have the few things which I had

brought with me sent to my house by any servant who might be going to L——, and was soon pleased to find myself outside the park-gates and on the highroad.

I had not gone a mile before I met Strahan on horse-back. He received my apologies for not waiting his return to bid him farewell without observation, and, dismounting, led his horse and walked beside me on my road. I saw that there was something on his mind ; at last he said, looking down—

“Did you hear the dogs howl last night ?”

“Yes ! the full moon !”

“You were awake, then, at the time. Did you hear any other sound ? Did you see anything ?”

“What should I hear or see ?”

Strahan was silent for some moments ; then he said, with great seriousness—

“I could not sleep when I went to bed last night ; I felt feverish and restless. Somehow or other, Margrave got into my head, mixed up in some strange way with Sir Philip Derval. I heard the dogs howl, and at the same time, or rather a few minutes later, I felt the whole house tremble, as a frail corner-house in London seems to tremble at night when a carriage is driven past it. The howling had then ceased, and ceased as suddenly as it had begun. I felt a vague superstitious alarm ; I got up, and went to my window, which was unclosed (it is my habit to sleep with my windows open) ; the moon was very bright, and I saw, I declare I saw, along the green alley that leads from the old part of the house to the mausoleum—No, I will

not say what I saw, or believed I saw—you would ridicule me, and justly. But, whatever it might be, on the earth without, or in the fancy within my brain, I was so terrified that I rushed back to my bed and buried my face in my pillow. I would have come to you ; but I did not dare to stir. I have been riding hard all the morning in order to recover my nerves. But I dread sleeping again under that roof, and now that you and Margrave leave me, I shall go this very day to London. I hope all that I have told you is no bad sign of any coming disease ; blood to the head, eh ? ”

“ No ; but imagination overstrained can produce wondrous effects. You do right to change the scene. Go to London at once, amuse yourself, and——”

“ Not return till the old house is razed to the ground. That is my resolve. You approve ? That’s well. All success to you, Fenwick. I will canter back and get my portmanteau ready, and the carriage out, in time for the five o’clock train.”

So then he too had seen—what ? I did not dare, and I did not desire to ask him. But he, at least, was not walking in his sleep ! Did we both dream, or neither ?

CHAPTER LIII.

THERE is an instance of the absorbing tyranny of everyday life which must have struck all such of my readers as have ever experienced one of those portents which are so at variance with everyday life, that the ordinary epithet bestowed on them is "supernatural."

And be my readers few or many, there will be no small proportion of them to whom, once at least in the course of their existence, a something strange and *eiríe* has occurred—a something which perplexed and baffled rational conjecture, and struck on those chords which vibrate to superstition. It may have been only a dream unaccountably verified—an undefinable presentiment or forewarning; but up from such slighter and vaguer tokens of the realm of marvel—up to the portents of ghostly apparitions or haunted chambers—I believe that the greater number of persons arrived at middle age, however instructed the class, however civilised the land, however sceptical the period, to which they belong, have either in themselves experienced, or heard recorded by intimate associates whose veracity they accept as indisputable, in all ordinary transactions of life, phenomena which are not to be solved by the

wit that mocks them, nor perhaps, always and entirely, to the contentment of the reason or the philosophy that explains them away. Such phenomena, I say, are infinitely more numerous than would appear from the instances currently quoted and dismissed with a jest ; for few of those who have witnessed them are disposed to own it, and they who only hear of them through others, however trustworthy, would not impugn their character for common sense by professing a belief to which common sense is a merciless persecutor. But he who reads my assertion in the quiet of his own room will perhaps pause, ransack his memory, and find there, in some dark corner which he excludes from " the babbling and remorseless day," a pale recollection that proves the assertion not untrue.

And it is, I say, an instance of the absorbing tyranny of everyday life, that whenever some such startling incident disturbs its regular tenor of thought and occupation, that same everyday life hastens to bury in its sands the object which has troubled its surface ; the more unaccountable, the more prodigious has been the phenomenon which has scared and astounded us, the more, with involuntary effort, the mind seeks to rid itself of an enigma which might disease the reason that tries to solve it. We go about our mundane business with renewed avidity ; we feel the necessity of proving to ourselves that we are still sober practical men, and refuse to be unfitted for the world which we know, by unsolicited visitations from worlds into which every glimpse is soon lost amid shadows. And it

amazes us to think how soon such incidents, though not actually forgotten, though they can be recalled—and recalled too vividly for health—at our will, are nevertheless thrust, as it were, out of the mind's sight, as we cast into lumber-rooms the crutches and splints that remind us of a broken limb which has recovered its strength and tone. It is a felicitous peculiarity in our organisation, which all members of my profession will have noticed, how soon, when a bodily pain is once past, it becomes erased from the recollection—how soon and how invariably the mind refuses to linger over and recall it. No man freed an hour before from a raging toothache, the rack of a neuralgia, seats himself in his arm-chair to recollect and ponder upon the anguish he has undergone. It is the same with certain afflictions of the mind—not with those that strike on our affections or blast our fortunes, overshadowing our whole future with a sense of loss; but where a trouble or calamity has been an accident, an episode in our wonted life, where it affects ourselves alone, where it is attended with a sense of shame and humiliation, where the pain of recalling it seems idle, and if indulged would almost madden us—agonies of that kind we do not brood over as we do over the death or falsehood of beloved friends, or the train of events by which we are reduced from wealth to penury. No one, for instance, who has escaped from a shipwreck, from the brink of a precipice, from the jaws of a tiger, spends his days and nights in reviving his terrors past, re-imagining dangers not to occur again,

or if they do occur, from which the experience undergone can suggest no additional safeguards. The current of our life, indeed, like that of the rivers, is most rapid in the midmost channel, where all streams are alike comparatively slow in the depth, and along the shores in which each life, as each river, has a character peculiar to itself. And hence those who would sail *with* the tide of the world, as those who sail with the tide of a river, hasten to take the middle of the stream, as those who sail *against* the tide are found clinging to the shore. I returned to my habitual duties and avocations with renewed energy ; I did not suffer my thoughts to dwell on the dreary wonders that had haunted me, from the evening I first met Sir Philip Derval to the morning on which I had quitted the house of his heir : whether realities or hallucinations, no guess of mine could unravel such marvels, and no prudence of mine guard me against their repetition. But I had no fear that they would be repeated, any more than the man who has gone through shipwreck, or the hairbreadth escape from a fall down a glacier, fears again to be found in a similar peril. Margrave had departed, whither I knew not, and with his departure ceased all sense of his influence. A certain calm within me, a tranquillising feeling of relief, seemed to me like a pledge of permanent delivery.

But that which did accompany and haunt me, through all my occupations and pursuits, was the melancholy remembrance of the love I had lost in Lilian. I heard from Mrs Ashleigh, who still fre-

quently visited me, that her daughter seemed much in the same quiet state of mind—perfectly reconciled to our separation—seldom mentioning my name—if mentioning it, with indifference ; the only thing remarkable in her state was her aversion to all society, and a kind of lethargy that would come over her, often in the daytime. She would suddenly fall into sleep and so remain for hours, but a sleep that seemed very serene and tranquil, and from which she woke of herself. She kept much within her own room, and always retired to it when visitors were announced.

Mrs Ashleigh began reluctantly to relinquish the persuasion she had so long and so obstinately maintained, that this state of feeling towards myself—and, indeed, this general change in Lilian—was but temporary and abnormal ; she began to allow that it was best to drop all thoughts of a renewed engagement—a future union. I proposed to see Lilian in her presence and in my professional capacity ; perhaps some physical cause, especially for this lethargy, might be detected and removed. Mrs Ashleigh owned to me that the idea had occurred to herself ; she had sounded Lilian upon it ; but her daughter had so resolutely opposed it—had said with so quiet a firmness, “ that all being over between us, a visit from me would be unwelcome and painful,” that Mrs Ashleigh felt that an interview thus deprecated would only confirm estrangement. One day, in calling, she asked my advice whether it would not be better to try the effect of change of air and scene, and, in some other place, some

other medical opinion might be taken? I approved of this suggestion with unspeakable sadness.

“And,” said Mrs Ashleigh, shedding tears, “if that experiment prove unsuccessful, I will write and let you know; and we must then consider what to say to the world as a reason why the marriage is broken off. I can render this more easy by staying away. I will not return to L—— till the matter has ceased to be the topic of talk, and at a distance any excuse will be less questioned and seem more natural. But still—still—let us hope still.”

“Have you one ground for hope?”

“Perhaps so; but you will think it very frail and fallacious.”

“Name it, and let me judge.”

“One night—in which you were on a visit to Derval Court——”

“Ay, that night.”

“Lilian woke me by a loud cry (she sleeps in the next room to me, and the door was left open); I hastened to her bedside in alarm; she was asleep, but appeared extremely agitated and convulsed. She kept calling on your name in a tone of passionate fondness, but as if in great terror. She cried, ‘Do not go, Allen!—do not go!—you know not what you brave!—what you do!’ Then she rose in her bed, clasping her hands. Her face was set and rigid: I tried to awake her, but could not. After a little time, she breathed a deep sigh, and murmured, ‘Allen, Allen! dear love! did you not hear?—did you not see me?’

What could thus baffle matter and traverse space but love and soul? Can you still doubt me, Allen?—doubt that I love you now, shall love you evermore?—yonder, yonder, as here below?’ She then sank back on her pillow, weeping, and then I woke her.”

“And what did she say on waking?”

“She did not remember what she had dreamed, except that she had passed through some great terror; but added, with a vague smile, ‘It is over, and I feel happy now.’ Then she turned round and fell asleep again, but quietly as a child, the tears dried, the smile resting.”

“Go, my dear friend, go; take Lilian away from this place as soon as you can; divert her mind with fresh scenes. I hope!—I do hope! Let me know where you fix yourself. I will seize a holiday—I need one; I will arrange as to my patients—I will come to the same place; she need not know of it—but I must be by to watch, to hear your news of her. Heaven bless you for what you have said! I hope!—I do hope!”

CHAPTER LIV.

SOME days after I received a few lines from Mrs Ashleigh. Her arrangements for departure were made. They were to start the next morning. She had fixed on going into the north of Devonshire, and staying some weeks either at Ilfracombe or Lynton, whichever place Lilian preferred. She would write as soon as they were settled.

I was up at my usual early hour the next morning. I resolved to go out towards Mrs Ashleigh's house, and watch, unnoticed, where I might perhaps catch a glimpse of Lilian as the carriage that would convey her to the railway passed my hiding-place.

I was looking impatiently at the clock ; it was yet two hours before the train by which Mrs Ashleigh proposed to leave. A loud ring at my bell ! I opened the door. Mrs Ashleigh rushed in, falling on my breast.

“Lilian ! Lilian !”

“Heavens ! What has happened ?”

“She has left—she is gone—gone away ! Oh, Allen ! how ?—whither ? Advise me. What is to be done ?”

“Come in—compose yourself—tell me all—clearly,

quickly. Lilian gone?—gone away? Impossible! She must be hid somewhere in the house—the garden; she, perhaps, did not like the journey. She may have crept away to some young friend's house. But *I* talk when you should talk: tell me all."

Little enough to tell! Lilian had seemed unusually cheerful the night before, and pleased at the thought of the excursion. Mother and daughter retired to rest early; Mrs Ashleigh saw Lilian sleeping quietly before she herself went to bed. She woke betimes in the morning, dressed herself, went into the next room to call Lilian—Lilian was not there. No suspicion of flight occurred to her. Perhaps her daughter might be up already, and gone down-stairs, remembering something she might wish to pack and take with her on the journey. Mrs Ashleigh was confirmed in this idea when she noticed that her own room door was left open. She went down-stairs, met a maid-servant in the hall, who told her, with alarm and surprise, that both the street and garden doors were found unclosed. No one had seen Lilian. Mrs Ashleigh now became seriously uneasy. On remounting to her daughter's room, she missed Lilian's bonnet and mantle. The house and garden were both searched in vain. There could be no doubt that Lilian had gone—must have stolen noiselessly at night through her mother's room, and let herself out of the house and through the garden.

"Do you think she could have received any letter, any message, any visitor, unknown to you?"

“I cannot think it. Why do you ask? Oh, Allen, you do not believe there is any accomplice in this disappearance! No, you do not believe it. But my child’s honour! What will the world think?”

Not for the world cared I at that moment. I could think only of Lilian, and without one suspicion that imputed blame to her.

“Be quiet, be silent; perhaps she has gone on some visit and will return. Meanwhile, leave inquiry to me.”

CHAPTER LV.

It seemed incredible that Lilian could wander far without being observed. I soon ascertained that she had not gone away by the railway—by any public conveyance—had hired no carriage; she must therefore be still in the town, or have left it on foot. The greater part of the day was consumed in unsuccessful inquiries, and faint hopes that she would return; meanwhile the news of her disappearance had spread: how could such news fail to do so?

An acquaintance of mine met me under the archway of Monk's Gate. He wrung my hand, and looked at me with great compassion.

"I fear," said he, "that we were all deceived in that young Margrave. He seemed so well conducted, in spite of his lively manners. But——"

"But what?"

"Mrs Ashleigh was perhaps imprudent to admit him into her house so familiarly. He was certainly very handsome. Young ladies will be romantic."

"How dare you, sir!" I cried, choked with rage. "And without any colouring to so calumnious a suggestion! Margrave has not been in the town for many days. No one knows even where he is."

“Oh yes, it is known where he is. He wrote to order the effects which he had left here to be sent to Penrith.”

“When?”

“The letter arrived the day before yesterday. I happened to be calling at the house where he last lodged when at L——, the house opposite Mrs Ashleigh’s garden. No doubt the servants in both houses gossip with each other. Miss Ashleigh could scarcely fail to hear of Mr Margrave’s address from her maid; and since servants will exchange gossip, they may also convey letters. Pardon me, you know I am your friend.”

“Not from the moment you breathe a word against my betrothed wife,” said I, fiercely.

I wrenched myself from the clasp of the man’s hand, but his words still rang in my ears. I mounted my horse; I rode into the adjoining suburbs, the neighbouring villages; there, however, I learned nothing till, just at nightfall, in a hamlet about ten miles from L——, a labourer declared he had seen a young lady dressed as I described, who passed by him in a path through the fields a little before noon; that he was surprised to see one so young, so well dressed, and a stranger to the neighbourhood (for he knew by sight the ladies of the few families scattered round), walking alone; that as he stepped out of the path to make way for her he looked hard into her face, and she did not heed him—seemed to gaze, right before her, into space. If her expression had been less quiet

and gentle, he should have thought, he could scarcely say why, that she was not quite right in her mind—there was a strange unconscious stare in her eyes, as if she were walking in her sleep. Her pace was very steady—neither quick nor slow. He had watched her till she passed out of sight, amidst a wood through which the path wound its way to a village at some distance.

I followed up this clue. I arrived at the village to which my informant directed me, but night had set in. Most of the houses were closed, so I could glean no further information from the cottages or at the inn. But the police superintendent of the district lived in the village, and to him I gave instructions which I had not given, and, indeed, would have been disinclined to give, to the police at L——. He was intelligent and kindly: he promised to communicate at once with the different police-stations for miles round, and with all delicacy and privacy. It was not probable that Lilian could have wandered in one day much further than the place at which I then was; it was scarcely to be conceived that she could baffle my pursuit and the practised skill of the police. I rested but a few hours at a small public-house, and was on horseback again at dawn. A little after sunrise I again heard of the wanderer. At a lonely cottage, by a brick-kiln, in the midst of a wide common, she had stopped the previous evening, and asked for a draught of milk. The woman who gave it to her inquired if she had lost her way? She said “No;”

and, only tarrying a few minutes, had gone across the common ; and the woman supposed she was a visitor at a gentleman's house which was at the further end of the waste, for the path she took led to no town, no village. It occurred to me, then, that Lilian avoided all highroads, all places, even the humblest, where men congregated together. But where could she have passed the night ? Not to fatigue the reader with the fruitless result of frequent inquiries, I will but say that at the end of the second day I had succeeded in ascertaining that I was still on her track ; and though I had ridden to and fro nearly double the distance—coming back again to places I had left behind—it was at the distance of forty miles from L—— that I last heard of her that second day. She had been seen sitting alone by a little brook only an hour before. I was led to the very spot by a woodman,—it was at the hour of twilight when he beheld her—she was leaning her face on her hand, and seemed weary. He spoke to her ; she did not answer, but rose, and resumed her way along the banks of the streamlet. That night I put up at no inn ; I followed the course of the brook for miles, then struck into every path that I could conceive her to have taken—in vain. Thus I consumed the night on foot, tying my horse to a tree, for he was tired out, and returning to him at sunrise. At noon the third day I again heard of her, and in a remote, savage part of the country. The features of the landscape were changed ; there was little foliage and little culture, but the ground was

broken into mounds and hollows, and covered with patches of heath and stunted brushwood. She had been seen by a shepherd, and he made the same observation as the first who had guided me on her track—she looked to him “like some one walking in her sleep.” An hour or two later, in a dell, amongst the furze-bushes, I chanced on a knot of ribbon. I recognised the colour Lilian habitually wore ; I felt certain that the ribbon was hers. Calculating the utmost speed I could ascribe to her, she could not be far off, yet still I failed to discover. The scene now was as solitary as a desert ; I met no one on my way. At length, a little after sunset, I found myself in view of the sea. A small town nestled below the cliffs, on which I was guiding my weary horse. I entered the town, and while my horse was baiting went in search of the resident policeman. The information I had directed to be sent round the country had reached him ; he had acted on it, but without result. I was surprised to hear him address me by name, and looking at him more narrowly, I recognised him as the policeman Waby. This young man had always expressed so grateful a sense of my attendance on his sister, and had, indeed, so notably evinced his gratitude in prosecuting with Margrave the inquiries which terminated in the discovery of Sir Philip Derval’s murderer, that I confided to him the name of the wanderer, of which he had not been previously informed ; but which it would be, indeed, impossible to conceal from him should the search in which his

aid was asked prove successful,—as he knew Miss Ashleigh by sight. His face immediately became thoughtful. He paused a minute or two, and then said—

“I think I have it, but I do not like to say ; I may pain you, sir.”

“Not by confidence ; you pain me by concealment.”

The man hesitated still ; I encouraged him, and then he spoke out frankly.

“Sir, did you never think it strange that Mr Margrave should move from his handsome rooms in the hotel to a somewhat uncomfortable lodging, from the window of which he could look down on Mrs Ashleigh’s garden ? I have seen him at night in the balcony of that window, and when I noticed him going so frequently into Mrs Ashleigh’s house during your unjust detention, I own, sir, I felt for you——”

“Nonsense ! Mr Margrave went to Mrs Ashleigh’s house as my friend. He has left L—— weeks ago. What has all this to do with—— ?”

“Patience, sir ; hear me out. I was sent from L—— to this station (on promotion, sir) a fortnight since last Friday, for there has been a good deal of crime hereabouts—it is a bad neighbourhood, and full of smugglers. Some days ago, in watching quietly near a lonely house, of which the owner is a suspicious character down in my books, I saw, to my amazement, Mr Margrave come out of that house—come out of a private door in it, which belongs to a part of the building not inhabited by the owner, but which used

formerly, when the house was a sort of inn, to be let to night-lodgers of the humblest description. I followed him ; he went down to the sea-shore, walked about, singing to himself ; then returned to the house, and re-entered by the same door. I soon learned that he lodged in the house—had lodged there for several days. The next morning, a fine yacht arrived at a tolerably convenient creek about a mile from the house, and there anchored. Sailors came ashore, rambling down to this town. The yacht belonged to Mr Margrave ; he had purchased it by commission in London. It is stored for a long voyage. He had directed it to come to him in this out-of-the-way place, where no gentleman's yacht ever put in before, though the creek, or bay, is handy enough for such craft. Well, sir, is it not strange that a rich young gentleman should come to this unfrequented sea-shore, put up with accommodation that must be of the rudest kind, in the house of a man known as a desperate smuggler, suspected to be worse?—order a yacht to meet him here ; is not all this strange ? But would it be strange if he were waiting for a young lady ? And if a young lady has fled at night from her home, and has come secretly along by-paths, which must have been very fully explained to her beforehand, and is now near that young gentleman's lodging, if not actually in it—if this be so, why, the affair is not so very strange after all. And now do you forgive me, sir ?”

“ Where is this house ? Lead me to it.”

“ You can hardly get to it except on foot ; rough

walking, sir, and about seven miles off by the shortest cut."

"Come, and at once ; come quickly ? We must be there before—before——"

"Before the young lady can get to the place ? Well, from what you say of the spot in which she was last seen, I think, on reflection, we may easily do that. I am at your service, sir. But I should warn you that the owners of the house, man and wife, are both of villanous character—would do anything for money. Mr Margrave, no doubt, has money enough ; and if the young lady chooses to go away with Mr Margrave, you know I have no power to help it."

"Leave all that to me ; all I ask of you is to show me the house."

We were soon out of the town ; the night had closed in ; it was very dark, in spite of a few stars ; the path was rugged and precipitous, sometimes skirting the very brink of perilous cliffs ; sometimes delving down to the sea-shore—there stopped by rock or wave—and painfully re-winding up the ascent.

"It is an ugly path, sir, but it saves four miles ; and anyhow the road is a bad one."

We came at last to a few wretched fishermen's huts. The moon had now risen, and revealed the squalor of poverty-stricken ruinous hovels ; a couple of boats moored to the shore ; a moaning, fretful sea ; and at a distance a vessel, with lights on board, lying perfectly still at anchor in a sheltered curve of the bold rude shore. The policeman pointed to the vessel.

"The yacht, sir ; the wind will be in her favour if she sails to-night."

We quickened our pace as well as the nature of the path would permit, left the huts behind us, and, about a mile farther on, came to a solitary house, larger than, from the policeman's description of Margrave's lodgment, I should have presupposed—a house that in the wilder parts of Scotland might be almost a laird's ; but even in the moonlight it looked very dilapidated and desolate. Most of the windows were closed, some with panes broken, stuffed with wisps of straw ; there were the remains of a wall round the house—it was broken in some parts (only its foundation left). On approaching the house, I observed two doors—one on the side fronting the sea, one on the other side facing a patch of broken ground that might once have been a garden, and lay waste within the enclosure of the ruined wall, encumbered with various litter—heaps of rubbish, a ruined shed, the carcass of a worn-out boat. This latter door stood wide open—the other was closed. The house was still and dark, as if either deserted or all within it retired to rest.

"I think that open door leads at once to the rooms Mr Margrave hires ; he can go in and out without disturbing the other inmates. They used to keep, on the side which they inhabit, a beer-house, but the magistrates shut it up ; still, it is a resort for bad characters. Now, sir, what shall we do ?"

"Watch separately. You wait within the enclosure of the wall, hid by those heaps of rubbish, near the

door ; none can enter but what you will observe them. If you see her, you will accost and stop her, and call aloud for me ; I shall be in hearing. I will go back to the high part of the ground yonder—it seems to me that she must pass that way ; and I would desire, if possible, to save her from the humiliation, the—the shame of coming within the precincts of that man's abode. I feel I may trust you now and hereafter. It is a great thing for the happiness and honour of this poor young lady and her mother, that I may be able to declare that I did not take her from that man, from any man—from that house, from any house. You comprehend me, and will obey ? I speak to you as a confidant—a friend.”

“ I thank you with my whole heart, sir, for so doing. You saved my sister's life, and the least I can do is to keep secret all that would pain your life if blabbed abroad. I know what mischief folks' tongues can make. I will wait by the door, never fear, and will rather lose my place than not strain all the legal power I possess to keep the young lady back from sorrow.”

This dialogue was interchanged in close hurried whisper behind the broken wall, and out of all hearing. Waby now crept through a wide gap into the enclosure, and nestled himself silently amidst the wrecks of the broken boat, not six feet from the open door, and close to the wall of the house itself. I went back some thirty yards up the road, to the rising ground which I had pointed out to him. According to the best calculation I could make—considering the pace at which I

had cleared the precipitous pathway, and reckoning from the place and time at which Lilian had been last seen—she could not possibly have yet entered that house. I might presume it would be more than half an hour before she could arrive ; I was in hopes that, during the interval, Margrave might show himself, perhaps at the door, or from the windows, or I might even by some light from the latter be guided to the room in which to find him. If, after waiting a reasonable time, Lilian should fail to appear, I had formed my plan of action ; but it was important for the success of that plan that I should not lose myself in the strange house, nor bring its owners to Margrave's aid—that I should surprise him alone and unawares. Half an hour, three quarters, a whole hour thus passed—no sign of my poor wanderer ; but signs there were of the enemy, from whom I resolved, at whatever risk, to free and to save her. A window on the ground floor to the left of the door, which had long fixed my attention because I had seen light through the chinks of the shutters, slowly unclosed, the shutters fell back, the casement opened, and I beheld Margrave distinctly ; he held something in his hand that gleamed in the moonlight, directed not towards the mound on which I stood, nor towards the path I had taken, but towards an open space beyond the ruined wall, to the right. Hid by a cluster of stunted shrubs, I watched him with a heart that beat with rage, not with terror. He seemed so intent in his own gaze, as to be unheeding or unconscious of all else. I stole from my post, and, still under

cover, sometimes of the broken wall, sometimes of the shaggy ridges that skirted the path, crept on, on, till I reached the side of the house itself ; then, there secure from his eyes, should he turn them, I stepped over the ruined wall, scarcely two feet high in that place, on—on towards the door. I passed the spot on which the policeman had shrouded himself ; he was seated, his back against the ribs of the broken boat. I put my hand to his mouth that he might not cry out in surprise, and whispered in his ear : he stirred not. I shook him by the arm ; still he stirred not. A ray of the moon fell on his face. I saw that he was in a profound slumber. Persuaded that it was no natural sleep, and that he had become useless to me, I passed him by. I was at the threshold of the open door ; the light from the window close by falling on the ground ; I was in the passage ; a glimmer came through the chinks of a door to the left ; I turned the handle noiselessly, and the next moment Margrave was locked in my grasp.

“Call out,” I hissed in his ear, “and I strangle you before any one can come to your help !”

He did not call out ; his eye, fixed on mine as he writhed round, saw, perhaps, his peril if he did. His countenance betrayed fear, but as I tightened my grasp that expression gave way to one of wrath and fierceness ; and as, in turn, I felt the grip of his hand, I knew that the struggle between us would be that of two strong men, each equally bent on the mastery of the other.

I was, as I have said before, endowed with an unusual degree of physical power, disciplined in early youth by athletic exercise and contest. In height and in muscle I had greatly the advantage over my antagonist; but such was the nervous vigour, the elastic energy of his incomparable frame, in which sinews seemed springs of steel, that had our encounter been one in which my strength was less heightened by rage, I believe that I could no more have coped with him than the bison can cope with the boa; but I was animated by that passion which trebles for a time all our forces—which makes even the weak man a match for the strong. I felt that if I were worsted, disabled, stricken down, Lilian might be lost in losing her sole protector; and, on the other hand, Margrave had been taken at the disadvantage of that surprise which will half unnerve the fiercest of the wild beasts; while as we grappled, reeling and rocking to and fro in our struggle, I soon observed that his attention was distracted—that his eye was turned towards an object which he had dropped involuntarily when I first seized him. He sought to drag me towards that object, and when near it stooped to seize. It was a bright, slender, short wand of steel. I remembered when and where I had seen it, whether in my waking state or in vision; and as his hand stole down to take it from the floor, I set on the wand my strong foot. I cannot tell by what rapid process of thought and association I came to the belief that the possession of a little piece of blunted steel would decide the conflict in favour of the pos-

sector, but the struggle now was concentrated on the attainment of that seemingly idle weapon. I was becoming breathless and exhausted, while Margrave seemed every moment to gather up new force, when, collecting all my strength for one final effort, I lifted him suddenly high in the air, and hurled him to the furthest end of the cramped arena to which our contest was confined. He fell, and with a force by which most men would have been stunned ; but he recovered himself with a quick rebound, and as he stood facing me there was something grand as well as terrible in his aspect. His eyes literally flamed as those of a tiger ; his rich hair, flung back from his knitted forehead, seemed to erect itself as an angry mane ; his lips, slightly parted, showed the glitter of his set teeth ; his whole frame seemed larger in the tension of the muscles, and as, gradually relaxing his first defying and haughty attitude, he crouched as the panther crouches for its deadly spring, I felt as if it were a wild beast whose rush was coming upon me—wild beast, but still Man, the king of the animals, fashioned forth from no mixture of humbler races by the slow revolutions of time, but his royalty stamped on his form when the earth became fit for his coming.*

At that moment I snatched up the wand, directed

* “ And yet, even if we entirely omit the consideration of the soul, that immaterial and immortal principle which is for a time united to his body, and view him only in his merely animal character, man is still the most excellent of animals.”—Dr Kidd ‘On the Adaptation of External Nature to the Physical Condition of Man,’ sect. iii. page 18.

it towards him, and, advancing with a fearless stride, cried—

“Down to my feet, miserable sorcerer!”

To my own amaze, the effect was instantaneous. My terrible antagonist dropped to the floor as a dog drops at the word of his master. The muscles of his frowning countenance relaxed, the glare of his wrathful eyes grew dull and rayless; his limbs lay prostrate and unnerved, his head resting against the wall, his arms limp and drooping by his side. I approached him slowly and cautiously; he seemed cast into a profound slumber.

“You are at my mercy now!” said I.

He moved his head as in sign of deprecating submission.

“You hear and understand me? Speak!”

His lips faintly muttered, “Yes.”

“I command you to answer truly the questions I shall address to you.”

“I must, while yet sensible of the power that has passed to your hand.”

“Is it by some occult magnetic property in this wand that you have exercised so demoniac an influence over a creature so pure as Lilian Ashleigh?”

“By that wand, and by other arts which you could not comprehend.”

“And for what infamous object?—her seduction, her dishonour?”

“No! I sought in her the aid of a gift which would cease, did she cease to be pure. At first I but cast my

influence upon her that through her I might influence yourself. I needed your help to discover a secret. Circumstances steeled your mind against me. I could no longer hope that you would voluntarily lend yourself to my will. Meanwhile I had found in her the light of a loftier knowledge than that of your science; through that knowledge, duly heeded and cultivated, I hoped to divine what I cannot of myself discover. Therefore I deepened over her mind the spells I command—therefore I have drawn her hither as the loadstone draws the steel, and therefore I would have borne her with me to the shores to which I was about this night to sail. I had cast the inmates of the house, and all around it, into slumber, in order that none might witness her departure; had I not done so, I should have summoned others to my aid, in spite of your threat.”

“And would Lilian Ashleigh have passively accompanied you, to her own irretrievable disgrace?”

“She could not have helped it; she would have been unconscious of her acts; she was, and is, in a trance; nor, had she gone with me, would she have waked from that state while she lived—that would not have been long.”

“Wretch! and for what object of unhallowed curiosity do you exert an influence which withers away the life of its victim?”

“Not curiosity, but the instinct of self-preservation. I count on no life beyond the grave. I would defy the grave, and live on.”

“And was it to learn, through some ghastly agencies, the secret of renewing existence, that you lured me by the shadow of your own image on the night when we met last?”

The voice of Margrave here became very faint as he answered me, and his countenance began to exhibit the signs of an exhaustion almost mortal.

“Be quick,” he murmured, “or I die. The fluid which emanates from that wand, in the hand of one who envenoms the fluid with his own hatred and rage, will prove fatal to my life. Lower the wand from my forehead; low—low;—lower still!”

“What was the nature of that rite in which you constrained me to share?”

“I cannot say. You are killing me. Enough that you were saved from a great danger by the apparition of the protecting image vouchsafed to your eye; otherwise you would—you would—— Oh, release me! Away! away!”

The foam gathered to his lips; his limbs became fearfully convulsed.

“One question more: Where is Lilian at this moment? Answer that question, and I depart.”

He raised his head, made a visible effort to rally his strength, and gasped out—

“Yonder. Pass through the open space up the cliff, beside a thorn-tree—you will find her there, where she halted when the wand dropped from my hand. But—but—beware! Ha! you will serve me yet, and through her! They said so that night, though you heard them

not. THEY said it!" Here his face became death-like; he pressed his hand on his heart, and shrieked out, "Away—away! or you are my murderer!"

I retreated to the other end of the room, turning the wand from him, and when I gained the door, looked back; his convulsions had ceased, but he seemed locked in a profound swoon. I left the room—the house—paused by Waby; he was still sleeping. "Awake!" I said, and touched him with the wand. He started up at once, rubbed his eyes, began stammering out excuses. I checked them, and bade him follow me. I took the way up the open ground towards which Margrave had pointed the wand, and there, motionless, beside a gnarled fantastic thorn-tree, stood Lilian. Her arms were folded across her breast; her face, seen by the moonlight, looked so innocent and so infantine that I needed no other evidence to tell me how unconscious she was of the peril to which her steps had been drawn. I took her gently by the hand. "Come with me," I said, in a whisper, and she obeyed me silently, and with a placid smile.

Rough though the way, she seemed unconscious of fatigue. I placed her arm in mine, but she did not lean on it. We got back to the town. I obtained there an old chaise and a pair of horses. At morning Lilian was under her mother's roof. About the noon of that day fever seized her; she became rapidly worse, and, to all appearance, in imminent danger. Delirium set in; I watched beside her night and day, supported by an inward conviction of her recovery, but tortured

by the sight of her sufferings. On the third day a change for the better became visible ; her sleep was calm, her breathing regular.

Shortly afterwards she woke, out of danger. Her eyes fell at once on me with all their old ineffable tender sweetness.

“Oh, Allen, beloved, have I not been very ill? But I am almost well now. Do not weep ; I shall live for you—for your sake.” And she bent forward, drawing my hand from my streaming eyes, and kissing me with a child’s guileless kiss on my burning forehead.

CHAPTER LVI.

LILIAN recovered, but the strange thing was this : all memory of the weeks that had elapsed since her return from visiting her aunt was completely obliterated ; she seemed in profound ignorance of the charge on which I had been confined—perfectly ignorant even of the existence of Margrave. She had, indeed, a very vague reminiscence of her conversation with me in the garden—the first conversation which had ever been embittered by a disagreement—but that disagreement itself she did not recollect. Her belief was that she had been ill and light-headed since that evening. From that evening to the hour of her waking, conscious and revived, all was a blank. Her love for me was restored, as if its thread had never been broken. Some such instances of oblivion after bodily illness or mental shock are familiar enough to the practice of all medical men ;*

* Such instances of suspense of memory are recorded in most physiological and in some metaphysical works. Dr Abercrombie notices some more or less similar to that related in the text :—“ A young lady who was present at a catastrophe in Scotland, in which many people lost their lives by the fall of the gallery of a church, escaped without any injury, but with the complete loss of the recollection of any of the circumstances ; and this extended not only to the accident, but to everything that had occurred to her for a cer-

and I was therefore enabled to appease the anxiety and wonder of Mrs Ashleigh, by quoting various examples of loss or suspension of memory. We agreed that it would be necessary to break to Lilian, though very cautiously, the story of Sir Philip Derval's murder, and the charge to which I had been subjected. She could not fail to hear of those events from others. How shall I express her womanly terror, her loving, sympathising pity, on hearing the tale, which I softened as well as I could?

“And to think that I knew nothing of this!” she cried, clasping my hand. “To think that you were in peril, and that I was not by your side!”

Her mother spoke of Margrave as a visitor—an agreeable, lively stranger; Lilian could not even recollect his name, but she seemed shocked to think that any visitor had been admitted while I was in circumstances so awful! Need I say that our engagement was renewed? Renewed! To *her* knowledge and to her heart it had never been interrupted for a moment. But oh! the malignity of the wrong world! Oh! that strange lust of mangling reputations, which seizes on hearts the least wantonly cruel! Let two

tain time before going to church. A lady whom I attended some years ago in a protracted illness, in which her memory became much impaired, lost the recollection of a period of about ten or twelve years, but spoke with perfect consistency of things as they stood before that time.” Dr Abercrombie adds—“As far as I have been able to trace it, the principle in such cases seems to be, that when the memory is impaired to a certain degree, the loss of it extends backward to some event or some period by which a particularly deep impression had been made upon the mind.”—Abercrombie ‘On the Intellectual Powers,’ pp. 118, 119 (15th edition).

idle tongues utter a tale against some third person, who never offended the babblers, and how the tale spreads, like fire, lighted none know how, in the herbage of an American prairie ! Who shall put it out ?

What right have we to pry into the secrets of other men's hearths ? True or false, the tale that is gabbled to us, what concern of ours can it be ? I speak not of cases to which the law has been summoned, which law has sifted, on which law has pronounced. But how, when the law is silent, can we assume its verdicts ? How be all judges, where there has been no witness-box, no cross-examination, no jury ? Yet every day we put on our ermine, and make ourselves judges—judges sure to condemn, and on what evidence ? That which no court of law will receive. Somebody has said something to somebody, which somebody repeats to everybody !

The gossip of L—— had set in full current against Lilian's fair name. No ladies had called or sent to congratulate Mrs Ashleigh on her return, or to inquire after Lilian herself during her struggle between life and death.

How I missed the Queen of the Hill at this critical moment ! How I longed for aid to crush the slander, with which I knew not how to grapple—aid in her knowledge of the world, and her ascendancy over its judgments ! I had heard from her once since her absence, briefly but kindly expressing her amazement at the ineffable stupidity which could for a moment have subjected me to a suspicion of Sir Philip Derval's

strange murder, and congratulating me heartily on my complete vindication from so monstrous a charge. To this letter no address was given. I supposed the omission to be accidental, but on calling at her house to inquire her direction, I found that her servants did not know it.

What, then, was my joy, when, just at this juncture, I received a note from Mrs Poyntz, stating that she had returned the night before, and would be glad to see me.

I hastened to her house. "Ah," thought I, as I sprang lightly up the ascent to the Hill, "how the tattlers will be silenced by a word from her imperial lips!" And only just as I approached her door did it strike me how difficult, nay, how impossible, to explain to her—the hard positive woman, her who had, less ostensibly but more ruthlessly than myself, destroyed Dr Lloyd for his belief in the comparatively rational pretensions of clairvoyance—all the mystical excuses for Lilian's flight from her home? How speak to her—or, indeed, to any one—about an occult fascination and a magic wand? No matter: surely it would be enough to say that at the time Lilian had been light-headed, under the influence of the fever which had afterwards nearly proved fatal. The early friend of Anne Ashleigh would not be a severe critic on any tale that might right the good name of Anne Ashleigh's daughter. So assured, with a light heart and cheerful face, I followed the servant into the great lady's pleasant but decorous presence-chamber.

CHAPTER LVII.

MRS POYNTZ was on her favourite seat by the window, and, for a wonder, not knitting—that classic task seemed done ; but she was smoothing and folding the completed work with her white comely hand, and smiling over it, as if in complacent approval, when I entered the room. At the fireside sat the he-colonel, inspecting a newly invented barometer ; at another window, in the farthest recess of the room, stood Miss Jane Poyntz, with a young gentleman whom I had never before seen, but who turned his eyes full upon me with a haughty look as the servant announced my name. He was tall, well-proportioned, decidedly handsome, but with that expression of cold and concentrated self-esteem in his very attitude, as well as his countenance, which makes a man of merit unpopular, a man without merit ridiculous.

The he-colonel, always punctiliously civil, rose from his seat, shook hands with me cordially, and said, “Coldish weather to-day ; but we shall have rain to-morrow. Rainy seasons come in cycles. We are about to commence a cycle of them with heavy showers.” He sighed, and returned to his barometer.

Miss Jane bowed to me graciously enough, but was evidently a little confused, a circumstance which might well attract my notice, for I had never before seen that high-bred young lady deviate a hair's-breadth from the even tenor of a manner admirable for a cheerful and courteous ease, which, one felt convinced, would be unaltered to those around her if an earthquake swallowed one up an inch before her feet.

The young gentleman continued to eye me loftily, as the heir-apparent to some celestial planet might eye an inferior creature from a half-formed nebula suddenly dropped upon his sublime and perfected star.

Mrs Poyntz extended to me two fingers, and said, frigidly, "Delighted to see you again! How kind to attend so soon to my note!" Motioning me to a seat beside her, she here turned to her husband, and said, "Poyntz, since a cycle of rain begins to-morrow, better secure your ride to-day. Take these young people with you. I want to talk with Dr Fenwick."

The colonel carefully put away his barometer, and saying to his daughter, "Come!" went forth. Jane followed her father; the young gentleman followed Jane.

The reception I had met chilled and disappointed me. I felt that Mrs Poyntz was changed, and in her change the whole house seemed changed. The very chairs looked civilly unfriendly, as if preparing to turn their backs on me. However, I was not in the false position of an intruder; I had been summoned; it was for Mrs Poyntz to speak first, and I waited quietly for her to do so.

She finished the careful folding of her work, and then laid it at rest in the drawer of the table at which she sat. Having so done, she turned to me, and said—

“By the way, I ought to have introduced to you my young guest, Mr Ashleigh Sumner. You would like him. He has talents—not showy, but solid. He will succeed in public life.”

“So that young man is Mr Ashleigh Sumner? I do not wonder that Miss Ashleigh rejected him.”

I said this, for I was nettled, as well as surprised, at the coolness with which a lady who had professed a friendship for me, mentioned that fortunate young gentleman, with so complete an oblivion of all the antecedents that had once made his name painful to my ear.

In turn, my answer seemed to nettle Mrs Poyntz.

“I am not so sure that she did reject; perhaps she rather misunderstood him; gallant compliments are not always proposals of marriage. However that be, his spirits were not much damped by Miss Ashleigh’s disdain, nor his heart deeply smitten by her charms, for he is now very happy, very much attached to another young lady, to whom he proposed, three days ago, at Lady Delafield’s; and, not to make a mystery of what all our little world will know before to-morrow, that young lady is my daughter Jane.”

“Were I acquainted with Mr Sumner I should offer to *him* my sincere congratulations.”

Mrs Poyntz resumed, without heeding a reply more

complimentary to Miss Jane than to the object of her choice :

“I told you that I meant Jane to marry a rich country gentleman, and Ashleigh Sumner is the very country gentleman I had then in my thoughts. He is cleverer and more ambitious than I could have hoped : he will be a minister some day, in right of his talents, and a peer, if he wishes it, in right of his lands. So that matter is settled.”

There was a pause, during which my mind passed rapidly through links of reminiscence and reasoning, which led me to a mingled sentiment of admiration for Mrs Poyntz as a diplomatist, and of distrust for Mrs Poyntz as a friend. It was now clear why Mrs Poyntz, before so little disposed to approve my love, had urged me at once to offer my hand to Lilian, in order that she might depart affianced and engaged to the house in which she would meet Mr Ashleigh Sumner. Hence Mrs Poyntz's anxiety to obtain all the information I could afford her of the sayings and doings at Lady Haughton's ; hence the publicity she had so suddenly given to my engagement ; hence, when Mr Sumner had gone away a rejected suitor, her own departure from L—— ; she had seized the very moment when a vain and proud man, piqued by the mortification received from one lady, falls the easier prey to the arts which allure his suit to another. All was so far clear to me. And I—was my self-conceit less egregious and less readily duped than that of yon gilded popinjay's ! How skilfully this woman had knitted me into her

work with the noiseless turn of her white hands ! and yet, forsooth, I must vaunt the superior scope of my intellect, and plumb all the fountains of Nature—I, who could not fathom the little pool of this female schemer's mind !

But that was no time for resentment to her, or rebuke to myself. She was now the woman who could best protect and save from slander my innocent, beloved Lilian. But how approach that perplexing subject ?

Mrs Poyntz approached it, and with her usual decision of purpose, which bore so deceitful a likeness to candour of mind.

“But it was not to talk of my affairs that I asked you to call, Allen Fenwick.” As she uttered my name her voice softened, and her manner took that maternal, caressing tenderness which had sometimes amused and sometimes misled me. “No, I do not forget that you asked me to be your friend, and I take, without scruple, the licence of friendship. What are these stories that I have heard already about Lilian Ashleigh, to whom you were once engaged ?”

“To whom I am still engaged.”

“Is it possible ? Oh, then, of course the stories I have heard are all false. Very likely ; no fiction in scandal ever surprises me. Poor dear Lilian, then, never ran away from her mother's house ?”

I smothered the angry pain which this mode of questioning caused me ; I knew how important it was to Lilian to secure to her the countenance and support

of this absolute autocrat ; I spoke of Lilian's long previous distemper of mind ; I accounted for it as any intelligent physician, unacquainted with all that I could not reveal, would account. Heaven forgive me for the venial falsehood, but I spoke of the terrible charge against myself as enough to unhinge, for a time, the intellect of a girl so acutely sensitive as Lilian ; I sought to create that impression as to the origin of all that might otherwise seem strange ; and in this state of cerebral excitement she had wandered from home—but alone. I had tracked every step of her way ; I had found and restored her to her home. A critical delirium had followed, from which she now rose, cured in health, unsuspecting that there could be a whisper against her name. And then, with all the eloquence I could command, and in words as adapted as I could frame them to soften the heart of a woman, herself a mother, I implored Mrs Poyntz's aid to silence all the cruelties of calumny, and extend her shield over the child of her own early friend.

When I came to an end, I had taken, with caressing force, Mrs Poyntz's reluctant hands in mine. There were tears in my voice, tears in my eyes. And the sound of her voice in reply gave me hope, for it was unusually gentle. She was evidently moved. The hope was soon quelled.

“Allen Fenwick,” she said, “you have a noble heart ; I grieve to see how it abuses your reason. I cannot aid Lilian Ashleigh in the way you ask. Do

not start back so indignantly. Listen to me as patiently as I have listened to you. That when you brought back the unfortunate young woman to her poor mother her mind was disordered, and became yet more dangerously so, I can well believe ; that she is now recovered and thinks with shame, or refuses to think at all, of her imprudent flight, I can believe also ; but I do not believe, the world cannot believe, that she did not, knowingly and purposely, quit her mother's roof, and in quest of that young stranger so incautiously, so unfeelingly admitted to her mother's house during the very time you were detained on the most awful of human accusations. Every one in the town knows that Mr Margrave visited daily at Mrs Ashleigh's during that painful period ; every one in the town knows in what strange out-of-the-way place this young man had niched himself ; and that a yacht was bought and lying in wait there. What for ? It is said that the chaise in which you brought Miss Ashleigh back to her home was hired at a village within an easy reach of Mr Margrave's lodging, of Mr Margrave's yacht. I rejoice that you saved the poor girl from ruin : but her good name is tarnished ; and if Anne Ashleigh, whom I sincerely pity, asks me my advice, I can but give her this : ' Leave L——, take your daughter abroad ; and if she is not to marry Mr Margrave, marry her as quietly and as quickly as possible to some foreigner.' ”

“Madam ! madam ! this, then, is your friendship to her—to me ! Oh, shame on you to insult thus

an affianced husband ! Shame on me ever to have thought you had a heart ! ”

“ A heart, man ! ” she exclaimed, almost fiercely, springing up, and startling me with the change in her countenance and voice. “ And little you would have valued, and pitilessly have crushed this heart, if I had suffered myself to show it to you ! What right have you to reproach me ? I felt a warm interest in your career, an unusual attraction in your conversation and society. Do you blame me for that, or should I blame myself ? Condemned to live amongst brainless puppets, my dull occupation to pull the strings that moved them, it was a new charm to my life to establish friendship and intercourse with intellect and spirit and courage. Ah ! I understand that look, half incredulous, half inquisitive. ”

“ Inquisitive, no ! incredulous, yes ! You desired my friendship, and how does your harsh judgment of my betrothed wife prove either to me or to her mother, whom you have known from your girlhood, the first duty of a friend—which is surely not that of leaving a friend’s side the moment that he needs countenance in calumny, succour in trouble ! ”

“ It is a better duty to prevent the calumny and avert the trouble. Leave aside Anne Ashleigh, a cipher that I can add or subtract from my sum of life as I please. What is my duty to yourself ? It is plain. It is to tell you that your honour commands you to abandon all thoughts of Lilian Ashleigh as your wife. Ungrateful that you are ! Do you sup-

pose it was no mortification to my pride of woman and friend, that you never approached me in confidence except to ask my good offices in promoting your courtship to another?—no shock to the quiet plans I had formed as to our familiar though harmless intimacy, to hear that you were bent on a marriage in which my friend would be lost to me?”

“Not lost!—not lost! On the contrary, the regard I must suppose you had for Lilian would have been a new link between our homes.”

“Pooh! Between me and that dreamy girl there could have been no sympathy, there could have grown up no regard. You would have been chained to your fireside, and—and—but no matter. I stifled my disappointment as soon as I felt it—stifled it, as all my life I have stifled that which either destiny or duty—duty to myself as to others—forbids me to indulge. Ah! do not fancy me one of the weak criminals who can suffer a worthy liking to grow into a debasing love! I was not in love with you, Allen Fenwick.”

“Do you think I was ever so presumptuous a coxcomb as to fancy it?”

“No,” she said, more softly; “I was not so false to my household ties and to my own nature. But there are some friendships which are as jealous as love. I could have cheerfully aided you in any choice which my sense could have approved for you as wise; I should have been pleased to have found in such a wife my most intimate companion. But that silly child!—absurd! Nevertheless, the freshness and enthusiasm

of your love touched me ; you asked my aid, and I gave it—perhaps I did believe that when you saw more of Lilian Ashleigh you would be cured of a fancy conceived by the eye—I should have known better what dupes the wisest men can be to the witcheries of a fair face and eighteen ! When I found your illusion obstinate, I wrenched myself away from a vain regret, turned to my own schemes and my own ambition, and smiled bitterly to think that, in pressing you to propose so hastily to Lilian, I made your blind passion an agent in my own plans. Enough of this. I speak thus openly and boldly to you now, because now I have not a sentiment that can interfere with the dispassionate soundness of my counsels. I repeat, you cannot now marry Lilian Ashleigh ; I cannot take my daughter to visit her ; I cannot destroy the social laws that I myself have set in my petty kingdom.”

“Be it as you will. I have pleaded for her while she is still Lilian Ashleigh. I plead for no one to whom I have once given my name. Before the woman whom I have taken from the altar, I can place, as a shield sufficient, my strong breast of man. Who has so deep an interest in Lilian’s purity as I have ? Who is so fitted to know the exact truth of every whisper against her ? Yet when I, whom you admit to have some reputation for shrewd intelligence,—I, who tracked her way,—I, who restored her to her home,—when I, Allen Fenwick, am so assured of her inviolable innocence in thought as in deed, that I trust my honour to her keeping,—surely, surely, I confute the

scandal which you yourself do not believe, though you refuse to reject and to annul it ! ”

“ Do not deceive yourself, Allen Fenwick,” said she, still standing beside me, her countenance now hard and stern. “ Look, where I stand, I am the WORLD ! The World, not as satirists depreciate or as optimists extol its immutable properties, its all-persuasive authority. I am the World ! And my voice is the World’s voice when it thus warns you. Should you make this marriage, your dignity of character and position would be gone !—if you look only to lucre and professional success, possibly *they* may not ultimately suffer. You have skill, which men need ; their need may still draw patients to your door and pour guineas into your purse. But you have the pride as well as the birth of a gentleman, and the wounds to that pride will be hourly chafed and never healed. Your strong breast of man has no shelter to the frail name of woman. The World, in its health, will look down on your wife, though its sick may look up to you. This is not all. The World, in its gentlest mood of indulgence, will say, compassionately, ‘ Poor man ! how weak and how deceived ! What an unfortunate marriage ! ’ But the World is not often indulgent—it looks most to the motives most seen on the surface. And the World will more frequently say, ‘ No, much too clever a man to be duped ! Miss Ashleigh had money. A good match to the man who liked gold better than honour. ’ ”

I sprang to my feet, with difficulty suppressing my rage ; and, remembering it was a woman who spoke to

me, "Farewell, madam," said I, through my grinded teeth. "Were you, indeed, the Personation of the World, whose mean notions you mouth so calmly, I could not disdain you more." I turned to the door, and left her still standing erect and menacing, the hard sneer on her resolute lip, the red glitter in her remorseless eye.

CHAPTER LVIII.

IF ever my heart vowed itself to Lilian, the vow was now the most trustful and the most sacred. I had relinquished our engagement before, but then her affection seemed, no matter from what cause, so estranged from me, that though I might be miserable to lose her, I deemed that she would be unhappy in our union. Then, too, she was the gem and darling of the little world in which she lived ; no whisper assailed her : now, I knew that she loved me ; I knew that her estrangement had been involuntary ; I knew that appearances wronged her, and that they never could be explained. I was in the true position of man to woman : I was the shield, the bulwark, the fearless confiding protector ! Resign her now because the world babbled, because my career might be impeded, because my good name might be impeached—resign her, and, in that resignation, confirm all that was said against her ! Could I do so, I should be the most craven of gentlemen, the meanest of men !

I went to Mrs Ashleigh, and entreated her to hasten my union with her daughter, and fix the marriage-day.

I found the poor lady dejected and distressed. She

was now sufficiently relieved from the absorbing anxiety for Lilian to be aware of the change on the face of that World which the woman I had just quitted personified and concentrated ; she had learned the cause from the bloodless lips of Miss Brabazon.

“ My child—my poor child ! ” murmured the mother. “ And she so guileless—so sensitive ! Could she know what is said, it would kill her. She would never marry you, Allen—she would never bring shame to you ! ”

“ She never need learn the barbarous calumny. Give her to me, and at once ; patients, fortune, fame are not only found at L——. Give her to me at once. But let me name a condition : I have a patrimonial independence—I have amassed large savings—I have my profession and my repute. I cannot touch her fortune—I cannot—never can ! Take it while you live ; when you die, leave it to accumulate for her children, if children she have ; not to me ; not to her—unless I am dead or ruined ! ”

“ Oh, Allen, what a heart !—what a heart ! No, not heart, Allen—that bird in its cage has a heart : *soul*—what a soul ! ”

CHAPTER LIX.

How innocent was Lilian's virgin blush when I knelt to her, and prayed that she would forestall the date that had been fixed for our union, and be my bride before the breath of the autumn had withered the pomp of the woodland and silenced the song of the birds! Meanwhile, I was so fearfully anxious that she should risk no danger of hearing, even of surmising, the cruel slander against her—should meet no cold contemptuous looks,—above all, should be safe from the barbed talk of Mrs Poyntz—that I insisted on the necessity of immediate change of air and scene. I proposed that we should all three depart, the next day, for the banks of my own beloved and native Windermere. By that pure mountain air Lilian's health would be soon re-established: in the church hallowed to me by the graves of my fathers our vows could be plighted. No calumny had ever cast a shadow over those graves. I felt as if my bride would be safer in the neighbourhood of my mother's tomb.

I carried my point: it was so arranged. Mrs Ashleigh, however, was reluctant to leave before she had seen her dear friend, Margaret Poyntz. I had not the

courage to tell her what she might expect to hear from that dear friend, but, as delicately as I could, I informed her that I had already seen the Queen of the Hill, and contradicted the gossip that had reached her; but that as yet, like other absolute sovereigns, the Queen of the Hill thought it politic to go with the popular stream, reserving all check on its direction till the rush of its torrent might slacken; and that it would be infinitely wiser in Mrs Ashleigh to postpone conversation with Mrs Poyntz until Lilian's return to L—— as my wife. Slander by that time would have wearied itself out, and Mrs Poyntz (assuming her friendship to Mrs Ashleigh to be sincere) would then be enabled to say with authority to her subjects, "Dr Fenwick alone knows the facts of the story, and his marriage with Miss Ashleigh refutes all the gossip to her prejudice."

I made that evening arrangements with a young and rising practitioner to secure attendance on my patients during my absence. I passed the greater part of the night in drawing up memoranda to guide my proxy in each case, however humble the sufferer. This task finished, I chanced, in searching for a small microscope, the wonders of which I thought might interest and amuse Lilian, to open a drawer in which I kept the manuscript of my cherished Physiological Work, and in so doing my eye fell upon the wand which I had taken from Margrave. I had thrown it into that drawer on my return home, after restoring Lilian to her mother's house, and, in the anxiety which had

subsequently preyed upon my mind, had almost forgotten the strange possession I had as strangely acquired. There it now lay, the instrument of agencies over the mechanism of nature which no doctrine admitted by my philosophy could accept, side by side with the presumptuous work which had analysed the springs by which nature is moved, and decided the principles by which reason metes out, from the inch of its knowledge, the plan of the Infinite Unknown.

I took up the wand and examined it curiously. It was evidently the work of an age far remote from our own, scored over with half-obliterated characters in some Eastern tongue, perhaps no longer extant. I found that it was hollow within. A more accurate observation showed, in the centre of this hollow, an exceedingly fine thread-like wire, the unattached end of which would slightly touch the palm when the wand was taken into the hand. Was it possible that there might be a natural and even a simple cause for the effects which this instrument produced? Could it serve to collect, from that great focus of animal heat and nervous energy which is placed in the palm of the human hand, some such latent fluid as that which Reichenbach calls the "odic," and which, according to him, "rushes through and pervades universal nature?" After all, why not? For how many centuries lay unknown all the virtues of the loadstone and the amber? It is but as yesterday that the forces of vapour have become to men genii more powerful than those conjured up by Aladdin; that light, at a touch, springs forth from

invisible air ; that thought finds a messenger swifter than the wings of the fabled Afrite. As, thus musing, my hand closed over the wand, I felt a wild thrill through my frame. I recoiled ; I was alarmed lest (according to the plain common-sense theory of Julius Faber) I might be preparing my imagination to form and to credit its own illusions. Hastily I laid down the wand. But then it occurred to me that, whatever its properties, it had so served the purposes of the dread Fascinator from whom it had been taken that he might probably seek to repossess himself of it ; he might contrive to enter my house in my absence ; more prudent to guard in my own watchful keeping the incomprehensible instrument of incomprehensible arts. I resolved, therefore, to take the wand with me, and placed it in my travelling-trunk, with such effects as I selected for use in the excursion that was to commence with the morrow. I now lay down to rest, but I could not sleep. The recollections of the painful interview with Mrs Poyntz became vivid and haunting. It was clear that the sentiment she had conceived for me was that of no simple friendship—something more or something less—but certainly something else ; and this conviction brought before me that proud hard face, disturbed by a pang wrestled against but not subdued, and that clear metallic voice troubled by the quiver of an emotion which, perhaps, she had never analysed to herself. I did not need her own assurance to know that this sentiment was not to be confounded with a love which she would have despised as a weakness and repelled

as a crime ; it was an inclination of the intellect, not a passion of the heart. But still it admitted a jealousy little less keen than that which has love for its cause—so true it is that jealousy is never absent where self-love is always present. Certainly it was no susceptibility of sober friendship which had made the stern arbitress of a coterie ascribe to her interest in me her pitiless judgment of Lilian. Strangely enough, with the image of this archetype of conventional usages and the trite social life, came that of the mysterious Margrave, surrounded by all the attributes with which superstition clothes the being of the shadowy borderland that lies beyond the chart of our visual world itself. By what link were creatures so dissimilar riveted together in the metaphysical chain of association? Both had entered into the record of my life when my life admitted its own first romance of love. Through the aid of this cynical schemer I had been made known to Lilian. At her house I had heard the dark story of that Louis Grayle, with whom, in mocking spite of my reason, conjectures, which that very reason must depose itself before it could resolve into distempered fancies, identified the enigmatical Margrave. And now both she, the representative of the formal world most opposed to visionary creeds, and he, who gathered round him all the terrors which haunt the realm of fable, stood united against me—foes with whom the intellect I had so haughtily cultured knew not how to cope. Whatever assault I might expect from either, I was unable to assail again. Alike, then, in

this are the Slander and the Phantom ; that which appals us most in their power over us is our impotence against them.

But up rose the sun, chasing the shadows from the earth, and brightening insensibly the thoughts of man. After all, Margrave had been baffled and defeated, whatever the arts he had practised and the secrets he possessed. It was, at least, doubtful whether his evil machinations would be renewed. He had seemed so incapable of long-sustained fixity of purpose, that it was probable he was already in pursuit of some new agent or victim ; and as to this commonplace and conventional spectre, the so-called World, if it is everywhere to him whom it awes, it is nowhere to him who despises it. What was the good or bad word of a Mrs Poyntz to me ? Ay, but to Lilian ? There, indeed, I trembled ; but still, even in trembling, it was sweet to think that my home would be her shelter—my choice her vindication. Ah ! how unutterably tender and reverential Love becomes when it assumes the duties of the guardian, and hallows its own heart into a sanctuary of refuge for the beloved !

CHAPTER LX.

THE beautiful lake ! We two are on its grassy margin—twilight melting into night ; the stars stealing forth, one after one. What a wonderful change is made within us when we come from our callings amongst men, chafed, wearied, wounded ; gnawed by our cares, perplexed by the doubts of our very wisdom, stung by the adder that dwells in cities—Slander ; nay, even if renowned, fatigued with the burden of the very names that we have won ! What a change is made within us when suddenly we find ourselves transported into the calm solitudes of Nature ;—into scenes familiar to our happy dreaming childhood ; back, back from the dusty thoroughfares of our toil-worn manhood to the golden fountain of our youth ! Blessed is the change, even when we have no companion beside us to whom the heart can whisper its sense of relief and joy. But if the one, in whom all our future is garnered up, be with us there, instead of that weary World which has so magically vanished away from the eye and the thought, then does the change make one of those rare epochs of life in which the charm is the stillness. In the pause from all by which our own turbulent struggles for happiness trouble existence, we feel with a rapt

amazement how calm a thing it is to be happy. And so as the night, in deepening, brightened, Lilian and I wandered by the starry lake. Conscious of no evil in ourselves, how secure we felt from evil! A few days more—a few days more, and we two should be as one! And that thought we uttered in many forms of words, brooding over it in the long intervals of enamoured silence.

And when we turned back to the quiet inn at which we had taken up our abode, and her mother, with her soft face, advanced to meet us, I said to Lilian—

“Would that in these scenes we could fix our home for life, away and afar from the dull town we have left behind us, with the fret of its wearying cares and the jar of its idle babble!”

“And why not, Allen? Why not?—But no, you would not be happy.”

“Not be happy, and with you? Sceptic, by what reasonings do you arrive at that ungracious conclusion?”

“The heart loves repose, and the soul contemplation, but the mind needs action. Is it not so?”

“Where learned you that aphorism, out of place on such rosy lips?”

“I learned it in studying you,” murmured Lilian, tenderly.

Here Mrs Ashleigh joined us. For the first time I slept under the same roof as Lilian. And I forgot that the universe contained an enigma to solve or an enemy to fear.

CHAPTER LXI.

TWENTY days—the happiest my life had ever known—thus glided on. Apart from the charm which love bestows on the beloved, there was that in Lilian's conversation which made her a delightful companion. Whether it was that, in this pause from the toils of my career, my mind could more pliantly supple itself to her graceful imagination, or that her imagination was less vague and dreamy amidst those rural scenes, which realised in their loveliness and grandeur its long concealed ideals, than it had been in the petty garden-ground neighbourhood by the stir and hubbub of the busy town,—in much that I had once slighted or contemned as the vagaries of undisciplined fancy I now recognised the sparkle and play of an intuitive genius, lighting up many a depth obscure to instructed thought. It is with some characters as with the subtler and more ethereal order of poets. To appreciate them we must suspend the course of artificial life. In the city we call them dreamers, on the mountain-top we find them interpreters.

In Lilian the sympathy with Nature was not, as in Margrave, from the joyous sense of Nature's lavish

vitality ; it was refined into exquisite perception of the diviner spirit by which that vitality is informed. Thus, like the artist, from outward forms of beauty she drew forth the covert types, lending to things the most familiar exquisite meanings unconceived before. For it is truly said by a wise critic of old, that "the attribute of Art is to suggest infinitely more than it expresses ;" and such suggestions, passing from the artist's innermost thought into the mind that receives them, open on and on into the Infinite of Ideas, as a moonlit wave struck by a passing oar impels wave upon wave along one track of light.

So the days glided by, and brought the eve of our bridal morn. It had been settled that, after the ceremony (which was to be performed by licence in the village church, at no great distance, which adjoined my paternal home, now passed away to strangers), we should make a short excursion into Scotland, leaving Mrs Ashleigh to await our return at the little inn.

I had retired to my own room to answer some letters from anxious patients, and having finished these, I looked into my trunk for a Guide-Book to the North, which I had brought with me. My hand came upon Margrave's wand, and, remembering that strange thrill which had passed through me when I last handled it, I drew it forth, resolved to examine calmly if I could detect the cause of the sensation. It was not now the time of night in which the imagination is most liable to credulous impressions, nor was I now in the anxious and jaded state of mind in which such

impressions may be the more readily conceived. The sun was slowly setting over the delicious landscape ; the air cool and serene ; my thoughts collected—heart and conscience alike at peace. I took, then, the wand, and adjusted it to the palm of the hand as I had done before. I felt the slight touch of the delicate wire within, and again the thrill ! I did not this time recoil ; I continued to grasp the wand, and sought deliberately to analyse my own sensations in the contact. There came over me an increased consciousness of vital power ; a certain exhilaration, elasticity, vigour, such as a strong cordial may produce on a fainting man. All the forces of my frame seemed refreshed, redoubled ; and as such effects on the physical system are ordinarily accompanied by corresponding effects on the mind, so I was sensible of a proud elation of spirits—a kind of defying, superb self-glorying. All fear seemed blotted out from my thought, as a weakness impossible to the grandeur and might which belong to Intellectual Man ; I felt as if it were a royal delight to scorn Earth and its opinions, brave Hades and its spectres. Rapidly this new-born arrogance enlarged itself into desires vague but daring. My mind reverting to the wild phenomena associated with its memories of Margrave, I said, half aloud, “ If a creature so beneath myself in constancy of will and completion of thought can wrest from Nature favours so marvellous, what could not be won from her by me, her patient persevering seeker ? What if there be spirits around and about, invisible to the common

eye, but whom we can submit to our control; and what if this rod be charged with some occult fluid, that runs through all creation, and can be so disciplined as to establish communication wherever life and thought can reach to beings that live and think? So would the mystics of old explain what perplexes me. Am I sure that the mystics of old duped themselves or their pupils? This, then—this slight wand, light as a reed in my grasp—this, then, was the instrument by which Margrave sent his irresistible will through air and space, and by which I smote himself, in the midst of his tiger-like wrath, into the helplessness of a sick man's swoon! Can the instrument at this distance still control him; if now meditating evil, disarm and disable his purpose?" Involuntarily as I revolved these ideas, I stretched forth the wand, with a concentrated energy of desire that its influence should reach Margrave and command him. And since I knew not his whereabouts, yet was vaguely aware that, according to any conceivable theory by which the wand could be supposed to carry its imagined virtues to definite goals in distant space, it should be pointed in the direction of the object it was intended to affect, so I slowly moved the wand as if describing a circle, and thus, in some point of the circle—east, west, north, or south—the direction could not fail to be true. Before I had performed half the circle, the wand of itself stopped, resisting palpably the movement of my hand to impel it onward. Had it, then, found the point to which my will was guiding it, obeying my will by some mag-

netic sympathy never yet comprehended by any recognised science? I know not; but I had not held it thus fixed for many seconds, before a cold air, well remembered, passed by me, stirring the roots of my hair; and, reflected against the opposite wall, stood the hateful Scin-Læca. The shadow was dimmer in its light than when before beheld, and the outline of the features was less distinct—still it was the unmistakable *lemur*, or image of Margrave.

And a voice was conveyed to my senses, saying, as from a great distance, and in weary yet angry accents—

“You have summoned me! Wherefore?”

I overcame the startled shudder with which at first I beheld the Shadow and heard the Voice.

“I summoned you not,” said I; “I sought but to impose upon you my will, that you should persecute, with your ghastly influences, me and mine no more. And now, by whatever authority this wand bestows on me, I so adjure and command you!”

I thought there was a sneer of disdain on the lip through which the answer seemed to come—

“Vain and ignorant; it is but a shadow you command. My body you have cast into a sleep, and it knows not that the shadow is here; nor, when it wakes, will the brain be aware of one reminiscence of the words that you utter or the words that you hear.”

“What, then, is this shadow that simulates the body? Is it that which in popular language is called the soul?”

“It is not: soul is no shadow.”

“What then?”

“Ask not me. Use the wand to invoke Intelligences higher than mine.”

“And how?”

“I will tell you not. Of yourself you may learn, if you guide the wand by your own pride of will and desire; but in the hands of him who has learned not the art, the wand has its dangers. Again, I say you have summoned me! Wherefore?”

“Lying shade, I summoned thee not.”

“So wouldst thou say to the demons, did they come in their terrible wrath, when the bungler, who knows not the springs that he moves, calls them up unawares, and can neither control nor dispel. Less revengeful than they, I leave thee unharmed, and depart!”

“Stay. If, as thou sayest, no command I address to thee—to thee, who art only the image or shadow—can have effect on the body and mind of the being whose likeness thou art, still thou canst tell me what passes now in his brain. Does it now harbour schemes against me through the woman I love? Answer truly.”

“I reply for the sleeper, of whom I am more than a likeness, though only the shadow. His thought speaks thus: ‘I know, Allen Fenwick, that in thee is the agent I need for achieving the end that I seek. Through the woman thou lovest I hope to subject thee. A grief that will harrow thy heart is at hand; when that grief shall befall, thou wilt welcome my coming. In me alone thy hope will be placed—through me alone wilt thou seek a path out of thy

sorrow. I shall ask my conditions: they will make thee my tool and my slave!’”

The shadow waned—it was gone. I did not seek to detain it, nor, had I sought, could I have known by what process. But a new idea now possessed me. This shadow, then, that had once so appalled and controlled me, was, by his own confession, nothing more than a shadow! It had spoken of higher Intelligences; from them I might learn what the Shadow could not reveal. As I still held the wand firmer and firmer in my grasp, my thoughts grew haughtier and bolder. Could the wand, then, bring those loftier beings thus darkly referred to before me? With that thought, intense and engrossing, I guided the wand towards the space, opening boundless and blue from the casement that let in the skies. The wand no longer resisted my hand.

In a few moments I felt the floors of the room vibrate; the air was darkened: a vaporous, hazy cloud seemed to rise from the ground without the casement; an awe, infinitely more deep and solemn than that which the Sein-Læca had caused in its earliest apparition, curdled through my veins, and stilled the very beat of my heart.

At that moment I heard, without, the voice of Lilian, singing a simple, sacred song which I had learned at my mother's knees, and taught to her the day before—singing low, and as with a warning angel's voice. By an irresistible impulse I dashed the wand to the ground, and bowed my head as I had bowed

it when my infant mind comprehended, without an effort, mysteries more solemn than those which perplexed me now. Slowly I raised my eyes, and looked round: the vaporous, hazy cloud had passed away, or melted into the ambient rose-tints amidst which the sun had sunk.

Then, by one of those common reactions from a period of overstrained excitement, there succeeded to that sentiment of arrogance and daring with which these wild, half-conscious invocations had been fostered and sustained, a profound humility, a warning fear.

“What!” said I, inly, “have all those sound resolutions, which my reason founded on the wise talk of Julius Faber, melted away in the wrack of haggard, dissolving fancies? Is this my boasted intellect, my vaunted science? I—I, Allen Fenwick, not only the credulous believer, but the blundering practitioner of an evil magic! Grant what may be possible, however uncomprehended—grant that in this accursed instrument of antique superstition there be some real powers—chemical, magnetic, no matter what—by which the imagination can be aroused, inflamed, deluded, so that it shapes the things I have seen, speaks in the tones I have heard—grant this, shall I keep ever ready, at the caprice of will, a constant temper to steal away my reason and fool my senses? Or if, on the other hand, I force my sense to admit what all sober men must reject—if I unschool myself to believe that in what I have just experienced there

is no mental illusion, that sorcery is a fact, and a demon world has gates which open to a key that a mortal can forge—who but a saint would not shrink from the practice of powers by which each passing thought of ill might find in a fiend its abettor? In either case—in any case—while I keep this direful relic of obsolete arts, I am haunted—cheated out of my senses—unfitted for the uses of life. If, as my ear or my fancy informs me, grief—human grief—is about to befall me, shall I, in the sting of impatient sorrow, have recourse to an aid which, the same voice declares, will reduce me to a tool and a slave?—tool and slave to a being I dread as a foe! Out on these nightmares! and away with the thing that bewitches the brain to conceive them!”

I rose; I took up the wand, holding it so that its hollow should not rest on the palm of the hand. I stole from the house by the back way, in order to avoid Lilian, whose voice I still heard, singing low, on the lawn in front. I came to a creek, to the bank of which a boat was moored, undid its chain, rowed on to a deep part of the lake, and dropped the wand into its waves. It sank at once; scarcely a ripple furrowed the surface, not a bubble arose from the deep. And, as the boat glided on, the star mirrored itself on the spot where the placid waters had closed over the tempter to evil.

Light at heart I sprang again on the shore, and, hastening to Lilian where she stood on the silvered shining sward, clasped her to my breast.

“Spirit of my life !” I murmured, “no enchantments for me but thine ! Thine are the spells by which creation is beautified, and, in that beauty, hallowed. What though we can see not into the measureless future from the verge of the moment—what though sorrow may smite us while we are dreaming of bliss, let the future not rob me of thee, and a balm will be found for each wound ! Love me ever as now, oh my Lilian ; troth to troth, side by side, till the grave !”

“And beyond the grave,” answered Lilian, softly.

CHAPTER LXII.

OUR vows are exchanged at the altar—the rite which made Lilian my wife is performed—we are returned from the church, amongst the hills, in which my fathers had worshipped; the joy-bells that had pealed for my birth had rung for my marriage. Lilian has gone to her room to prepare for our bridal excursion; while the carriage we have hired is waiting at the door. I am detaining her mother on the lawn, seeking to cheer and compose her spirits, painfully affected by that sense of change in the relations of child and parent which makes itself suddenly felt by the parent's heart on the day that secures to the child another heart on which to lean.

But Mrs Ashleigh's was one of those gentle womanly natures which, if easily afflicted, are easily consoled. And, already smiling through her tears, she was about to quit me and join her daughter, when one of the inn-servants came to me with some letters, which had just been delivered by the postman. As I took them from the servant, Mrs Ashleigh asked if there were any for her? She expected one from her housekeeper at L——, who had been taken ill in her absence, and

about whom the kind mistress felt anxious. The servant replied that there was no letter for her, but one directed to Miss Ashleigh, which he had just sent up to the young lady.

Mrs Ashleigh did not doubt that her housekeeper had written to Lilian, whom she had known from the cradle, and to whom she was tenderly attached, instead of to her mistress; and, saying something to me to that effect, quickened her steps towards the house.

I was glancing over my own letters, chiefly from patients, with a rapid eye, when a cry of agony, a cry as if of one suddenly stricken to the heart, pierced my ear—a cry from within the house. “Heavens! was not that Lilian’s voice?” The same doubt struck Mrs Ashleigh, who had already gained the door. She rushed on, disappearing within the threshold, and calling to me to follow. I bounded forward—passed her on the stairs—was in Lilian’s room before her.

My bride was on the floor, prostrate, insensible: so still, so colourless! that my first dreadful thought was that life had gone. In her hand was a letter, crushed, as with a convulsive sudden grasp.

It was long before the colour came back to her cheek, before the breath was perceptible on her lip. She woke, but not to health, not to sense. Hours were passed in violent convulsions, in which I momentarily feared her death. To these succeeded stupor, lethargy, not benignant sleep. That night, my bridal night, I passed as in some chamber to which I had been summoned to save youth from the grave. At

length—at length, life was rescued, was assured! Life came back, but the mind was gone. She knew me not, nor her mother. She spoke little and faintly; in the words she uttered there was no reason.

I pass hurriedly on; my experience here was in fault, my skill ineffectual. Day followed day, and no ray came back to the darkened brain. We bore her, by gentle stages, to London. I was sanguine of good result from skill more consummate than mine, and more specially devoted to diseases of the mind. I summoned the first advisers. In vain!—in vain!

CHAPTER LXIII.

AND the cause of this direful shock? Not this time could it be traced to some evil spell, some phantasmal influence. The cause was clear, and might have produced effects as sinister on nerves of stronger fibre if accompanied by a heart as delicately sensitive, an honour as exquisitely pure.

The letter found in her hand was without name; it was dated from L——, and bore the post-mark of that town. It conveyed to Lilian, in the biting words which female malice can make so sharp, the tale we had sought sedulously to guard from her ear—her flight, the construction that scandal put upon it. It affected for my blind infatuation a contemptuous pity; it asked her to pause before she brought on the name I offered to her an indelible disgrace. If she so decided, she was warned not to return to L——, or to prepare there for the sentence that would exclude her from the society of her own sex. I cannot repeat more, I cannot minute down all that the letter expressed or implied, to wither the orange blossoms in a bride's wreath. The heart that took in the venom cast its

poison on the brain, and the mind fled before the presence of a thought so deadly to all the ideas which its innocence had heretofore conceived.

I knew not whom to suspect of the malignity of this mean and miserable outrage, nor did I much care to know. The handwriting, though evidently disguised, was that of a woman, and, therefore, had I discovered the author, my manhood would have forbidden me the idle solace of revenge. Mrs Poyntz, however resolute and pitiless her hostility when once aroused, was not without a certain largeness of nature irreconcilable with the most dastardly of all the weapons that envy or hatred can supply to the vile. She had too lofty a self-esteem, and too decorous a regard for the moral sentiment of the world that she typified, to do, or connive at, an act which degrades the gentlewoman. Putting her aside, what other female enemy had Lilian provoked? No matter! What other woman at L—— was worth the condescension of a conjecture?

After listening to all that the ablest of my professional brethren in the metropolis could suggest to guide me, and trying in vain their remedies, I brought back my charge to L——. Retaining my former residence for the visits of patients, I engaged, for the privacy of my home, a house two miles from the town, secluded in its own grounds, and guarded by high walls.

Lilian's mother removed to my mournful dwelling-place. Abbots' House, in the centre of that tattling coterie, had become distasteful to her, and to me it was

associated with thoughts of anguish and of terror. I could not, without a shudder, have entered its grounds—could not, without a stab at the heart, have seen again the old fairyland round the Monk's Well, nor the dark cedar-tree under which Lilian's hand had been placed in mine ; and a superstitious remembrance, banished while Lilian's angel face had brightened the fatal precincts, now revived in full force. The dying man's curse—had it not been fulfilled !

A new occupant for the old house was found within a week after Mrs Ashleigh had written from London to a house-agent at L——, intimating her desire to dispose of the lease. Shortly before we had gone to Windermere, Miss Brabazon had become enriched by a liberal life-annuity bequeathed to her by her uncle, Sir Phelim. Her means thus enabled her to move, from the comparatively humble lodging she had hitherto occupied, to Abbots' House ; but just as she had there commenced a series of ostentatious entertainments, implying an ambitious desire to dispute with Mrs Poyntz the sovereignty of the Hill, she was attacked by some severe malady which appeared complicated with spinal disease, and after my return to L—— I sometimes met her, on the spacious platform of the Hill, drawn along slowly in a Bath chair, her livid face peering forth from piles of Indian shawls and Siberian furs, and the gaunt figure of Dr Jones stalking by her side, taciturn and gloomy as some sincere mourner who conducts to the grave the patron on

whose life he himself had conveniently lived. It was in the dismal month of February that I returned to L——, and I took possession of my blighted nuptial home on the anniversary of the very day in which I had passed through the dead dumb world from the naturalist's gloomy death-room.

CHAPTER LXIV.

LILIAN'S wondrous gentleness of nature did not desert her in the suspension of her reason. She was habitually calm—very silent ; when she spoke it was rarely on earthly things—on things familiar to her past—things one could comprehend. Her thought seemed to have quitted the earth, seeking refuge in some imaginary heaven. She spoke of wanderings with her father as if he were living still ; she did not seem to understand the meaning we attach to the word Death. She would sit for hours murmuring to herself : when one sought to catch the words, they seemed in converse with invisible spirits. We found it cruel to disturb her at such times, for if left unmolested her face was serene—more serenely beautiful than I had seen it even in our happiest hours ; but when we called her back to the wrecks of her real life, her eye became troubled, restless, anxious, and she would sigh—oh, so heavily ! At times, if we did not seem to observe her, she would quietly resume her once favourite accomplishments—drawing, music. And in these her young excellence was still apparent, only the drawings were strange and fantastic : they had a resemblance to

those with which the painter Blake, himself a visionary, illustrated the poems of the 'Night Thoughts' and 'The Grave.' Faces of exquisite loveliness, forms of ærial grace, coming forth from the bells of flowers, or floating upwards amidst the spray of fountains, their outlines melting away in fountain or in flower. So with her music : her mother could not recognise the airs she played, for a while so sweetly and with so ineffable a pathos, that one could scarcely hear her without weeping ; and then would come, as if involuntarily, an abrupt discord, and, starting, she would cease and look round, disquieted, aghast.

And still she did not recognise Mrs Ashleigh nor myself as her mother, her husband ; but she had by degrees learned to distinguish us both from others. To her mother she gave no name, seemed pleased to see her, but not sensibly to miss her when away ; me she called her brother : if longer absent than usual, me she missed. When, after the toils of the day, I came to join her, even if she spoke not, her sweet face brightened. When she sang she beckoned me to come nearer, and looked at me fixedly, with eyes ever tender, often tearful ; when she drew, she would pause and glance over her shoulder to see that I was watching her, and point to the drawings with a smile of strange significance, as if they conveyed, in some covert allegory, messages meant for me ; so, at least, I interpreted her smile, and taught myself to say, " Yes, Lilian, I understand ! "

And more than once, when I had so answered, she

rose and kissed my forehead. I thought my heart would have broken when I felt that spirit-like melancholy kiss.

And yet how marvellously the human mind teaches itself to extract consolation from its sorrows! The least wretched of my hours were those that I passed in that saddened room, seeking how to establish fragments of intercourse, invent signs, by which each might interpret each, between the intellect I had so laboriously cultured, so arrogantly vaunted, and the fancies wandering through the dark, deprived of their guide in reason. It was something even of joy to feel myself needed for her guardianship, endeared and yearned for still by some unshattered instinct of her heart; and when, parting from her for the night, I stole the moment in which on her soft face seemed resting least of shadow, to ask, in a trembling whisper, "Lilian, are the angels watching over you?" and she would answer "Yes," sometimes in words, sometimes with a mysterious happy smile—then—then I went to my lonely room, comforted and thankful.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE blow that had fallen on my hearth effectually, inevitably killed all the slander that might have troubled me in joy. Before the awe of a great calamity the small passions of a mean malignity slink abashed. I had requested Mrs Ashleigh not to mention the vile letter which Lilian had received. I would not give a triumph to the unknown calumniator, nor wring forth her vain remorse, by the pain of acknowledging an indignity to my darling's honour; yet, somehow or other, the true cause of Lilian's affliction had crept out—perhaps through the talk of servants—and the public shock was universal. By one of those instincts of justice that lie deep in human hearts, though in ordinary moments overlaid by many a worldly layer, all felt (all mothers felt especially) that innocence alone could have been so unprepared for reproach. The explanation I had previously given, discredited then, was now accepted without a question. Lilian's present state accounted for all that ill-nature had before misconstrued. Her good name was restored to its maiden whiteness by the fate that had severed the ties of the bride. The formal dwellers on the Hill vied with the

franker, warmer-hearted households of Low Town in the nameless attentions by which sympathy and respect are rather delicately indicated than noisily proclaimed. Could Lilian have then recovered and been sensible of its repentant homage, how reverently that petty world would have thronged around her ! And ah ! could fortune and man's esteem have atoned for the blight of hopes that had been planted and cherished on ground beyond their reach, ambition and pride might have been well contented with the largeness of the exchange that courted their acceptance. Patients on patients crowded on me. Sympathy with my sorrow seemed to create and endear a more trustful belief in my skill. But the profession I had once so enthusiastically loved became to me wearisome, insipid, distasteful ; the kindness heaped on me gave no comfort—it but brought before me more vividly the conviction that it came too late to avail me ; it could not restore to me the mind, the love, the life of my life, which lay dark and shattered in the brain of my guileless Lilian. Secretly I felt a sullen resentment. I knew that to the crowd the resentment was unjust. The world itself is but an appearance ; who can blame it if appearances guide its laws ? But to those who had been detached from the crowd by the professions of friendship—those who, when the slander was yet new, and might have been awed into silence had they stood by my side—to the pressure of *their* hands *now* I had no response.

Against Mrs Poyntz, above all others, I bore a remembrance of unrelaxed, unmitigable indignation.

Her schemes for her daughter's marriage had triumphed—Jane was Mrs Ashleigh Sumner. Her mind was perhaps softened, now that the object which had sharpened its worldly faculties was accomplished ; but in vain, on first hearing of my affliction, had this she-Machiavel owned a humane remorse, and, with all her keen comprehension of each facility that circumstance gave to her will, availed herself of the general compassion to strengthen the popular reaction in favour of Lilian's assaulted honour—in vain had she written to me with a gentleness of sympathy foreign to her habitual characteristics—in vain besought me to call on her—in vain waylaid and accosted me with a humility that almost implored forgiveness ; I vouchsafed no reproach, but I could imply no pardon. I put between her and my great sorrow the impenetrable wall of my freezing silence.

One word of hers at the time that I had so pathetically besought her aid, and the parrot-flock that repeated her very whisper in noisy shrillness would have been as loud to defend as it had been to defame ; that vile letter might never have been written. Whoever its writer, it surely was one of the babblers who took their malice itself from the jest or the nod of their female despot ; and the writer might have justified herself in saying she did but coarsely proclaim what the oracle of worldly opinion, and the early friend of Lilian's own mother, had authorised her to believe.

By degrees, the bitterness at my heart diffused itself to the circumference of the circle in which my life

went its cheerless mechanical round. That cordial brotherhood with his patients, which is the true physician's happiest gift and humanest duty, forsook my breast. The warning words of Mrs Poyntz had come true. A patient that monopolised my thoughts awaited me at my own hearth! My conscience became troubled; I felt that my skill was lessened. I said to myself, "The physician who, on entering the sick-room, feels, while there, something that distracts the finest powers of his intellect from the sufferer's case, is unfit for his calling." A year had scarcely passed since my fatal wedding-day before I had formed a resolution to quit L——, and abandon my profession: and my resolution was confirmed, and my goal determined, by a letter I received from Julius Faber.

I had written at length to him, not many days after the blow that had fallen on me, stating all circumstances as calmly and clearly as my grief would allow, for I held his skill at a higher estimate than that of any living brother of my art, and I was not without hope in the efficacy of his advice. The letter I now received from him had been begun, and continued at some length, before my communication reached him. And this earlier portion contained animated and cheerful descriptions of his Australian life and home, which contrasted with the sorrowful tone of the supplement written in reply to the tidings with which I had wrung his friendly and tender heart. In this, the latter part of his letter, he suggested that if time had wrought no material change for the better, it might be

advisable to try the effect of foreign travel. Scenes entirely new might stimulate observation, and the observation of things external withdraw the sense from that brooding over images delusively formed within, which characterised the kind of mental alienation I had described. "Let any intellect create for itself a visionary world, and all reasonings built on it are fallacious : the visionary world vanishes in proportion as we can arouse a predominant interest in the actual."

This grand authority, who owed half his consummate skill as a practitioner to the scope of his knowledge as a philosopher, then proceeded to give me a hope which I had not dared, of myself, to form. He said, "I distinguish the case you so minutely detail from that insanity which is reason lost ; here it seems rather to be reason held in suspense. Where there is hereditary predisposition—where there is organic change of structure in the brain—nay, where there is that kind of insanity which takes the epithet of moral, whereby the whole character becomes so transformed that the prime element of sound understanding, conscience itself, is either erased or warped into the sanction of what, in a healthful state, it would most disapprove—it is only charlatans who promise effectual cure. But here I assume that there is no hereditary taint ; here I am convinced, from my own observation, that the nobility of the organs, all fresh as yet in the vigour of youth, would rather submit to death than to the permanent overthrow of their equilibrium in reason ; here, where you tell me the character preserves all its moral

attributes of gentleness and purity, and but over-indulges its own early habit of estranged contemplation ; here, without deceiving you in false kindness, I give you the guarantee of my experience when I bid you ‘hope!’ I am persuaded that sooner or later the mind, thus for a time affected, will right itself ; because here, in the cause of the malady, we do but deal with the nervous system. And *that* once righted, and the mind once disciplined in those practical duties which conjugal life necessitates, the malady itself will never return ; never be transmitted to the children on whom your wife’s restoration to health may permit you to count hereafter. If the course of travel I recommend, and the prescriptions I conjoin with that course, fail you, let me know ; and though I would fain close my days in this land, I will come to you. I love you as my son. I will tend your wife as my daughter.”

Foreign travel ! The idea smiled on me. Julius Faber’s companionship, sympathy, matchless skill ! the very thought seemed as a raft to a drowning mariner. I now read more attentively the earlier portions of his letter. They described, in glowing colours, the wondrous country in which he had fixed his home ; the joyous elasticity of its atmosphere ; the freshness of its primitive, pastoral life ; the strangeness of its scenery, with a flora and a fauna which have no similitudes in the ransacked quarters of the Old World. And the strong impulse seized me to transfer to the solitudes of that blithesome and hardy Nature a spirit no longer at home in the civilised haunts of men, and

household gods that shrank from all social eyes, and would fain have found a wilderness for the desolate hearth, on which they had ceased to be sacred if unveiled. As if to give practical excuse and reason for the idea that seized me, Julius Faber mentioned, incidentally, that the house and property of a wealthy speculator in his immediate neighbourhood were on sale at a price which seemed to me to be alluringly trivial, and, according to his judgment, far below the value they would soon reach in the hands of a more patient capitalist. He wrote at the period of the agricultural panic in the colony which preceded the discovery of its earliest gold-fields. But his geological science had convinced him that strata within and around the property now for sale were auriferous, and his intelligence enabled him to predict how inevitably man would be attracted towards the gold, and how surely the gold would fertilise the soil and enrich its owners. He described the house thus to be sold—in case I might know of a purchaser. It had been built at a cost unusual in those early times, and by one who clung to English tastes amidst Australian wilds, so that in this purchase a settler would escape the hardships he had then ordinarily to encounter: it was, in short, a home to which a man, more luxurious than I, might bear a bride with wants less simple than those which now sufficed for my darling Lilian.

This communication dwelt on my mind through the avocations of the day on which I received it, and in the evening I read all, except the supplement, aloud

to Mrs Ashleigh in her daughter's presence. I desired to see if Faber's descriptions of the country and its life, which in themselves were extremely spirited and striking, would arouse Lilian's interest. At first she did not seem to heed me while I read ; but when I came to Faber's loving account of little Amy, Lilian turned her eyes towards me, and evidently listened with attention. He wrote how the child had already become the most useful person in the simple household. How watchful the quickness of the heart had made the service of the eye ; all their associations of comfort had grown round her active, noiseless movements ; it was she who had contrived to monopolise the management or supervision of all that added to Home the nameless, interior charm. Under her eyes the rude furniture of the log-house grew inviting with English neatness ; she took charge of the dairy ; she had made the garden gay with flowers selected from the wild, and suggested the trellised walk, already covered with hardy vine. She was their confidant in every plan of improvement, their comforter in every anxious doubt, their nurse in every passing ailment, her very smile a refreshment in the weariness of daily toil. " How all that is best in womanhood," wrote the old man, with the enthusiasm which no time had reft from his hearty, healthful genius—"how all that is best in womanhood is here opening fast into flower from the bud of the infant's soul ! The atmosphere seems to suit it—the child-woman in the child-world !"

I heard Lilian sigh ; I looked towards her furtively ;

tears stood in her softened eyes ; her lip was quivering. Presently, she began to rub her right hand over the left—over the wedding-ring—at first slowly, then with quicker movement.

“It is not here,” she said, impatiently; “it is *not* here !”

“What is not here ?” asked Mrs Ashleigh, hanging over her.

Lilian leant back her head on her mother’s bosom, and answered, faintly—

“The stain ! some one said there was a stain on this hand. I do not see it—do you ?”

“There is no stain, never was,” said I ; “the hand is white as your own innocence, or the lily from which you take your name.”

“Hush ! you do not know my name. I will whisper it. Soft !—my name is Nightshade ! Do you want to know where the lily is now, brother ? I will tell you. There, in that letter—you call her Amy—she is the lily—take her to your breast—hide her. Hist ! what are those bells ? Marriage-bells. Do not let her hear them. For there is a cruel wind that whispers the bells, and the bells ring out what it whispers, louder and louder,

‘Stain on lily,
Shame on lily,
Wither lily.’

If she hears what the wind whispers to the bells, she will creep away into the dark, and then she, too, will turn to Nightshade.”

“Lilian, look up, awake ! You have been in a long, long dream : it is passing away. Lilian, my beloved, my blessed Lilian !”

Never till then had I heard from her even so vague an allusion to the fatal calumny, and its dreadful effect ; and while her words now pierced my heart, it beat, amongst its pangs, with a thrilling hope.

But, alas ! the idea that had gleamed upon her had vanished already. She murmured something about Circles of Fire, and a Veiled Woman in black garments ; became restless, agitated, and unconscious of our presence, and finally sank into a heavy sleep.

That night (my room was next to hers, with the intervening door open) I heard her cry out. I hastened to her side. She was still asleep, but there was an anxious labouring expression on her young face, and yet not an expression wholly of pain ; for her lips were parted with a smile—that glad yet troubled smile with which one who has been revolving some subject of perplexity or fear, greets a sudden thought that seems to solve the riddle, or prompt the escape from danger ; and as I softly took her hand she returned my gentle pressure, and inclining towards me, said, still in sleep—

“Let us go.”

“Whither ?” I answered, under my breath, so as not to awake her ; “is it to see the child of whom I read, and the land that is blooming out of the earth’s childhood ?”

“Out of the dark into the light ; where the leaves

do not change ; where the night is our day, and the winter our summer. Let us go—let us go !”

“We will go. Dream on undisturbed, my bride. Oh, that the dream could tell you that my love has not changed in our sorrow, holier and deeper than on the day in which our vows were exchanged ! In you still all my hopes fold their wings : where you are, there still I myself have my dreamland !”

The sweet face grew bright as I spoke ; all trouble left the smile ; softly she drew her hand from my clasp, and rested it for a moment on my bended head, as if in blessing.

I rose ; stole back to my own room, closing the door, lest the sob I could not stifle should mar her sleep.

CHAPTER LXVI.

I UNFOLDED my new prospects to Mrs Ashleigh. She was more easily reconciled to them than I could have supposed, judging by her habits, which were naturally indolent, and averse to all that disturbed their even tenor. But the great grief which had befallen her had roused up that strength of devotion which lies dormant in all hearts that are capable of loving another more than self. With her full consent I wrote to Faber, communicating my intentions, instructing him to purchase the property he had so commended, and enclosing my banker's order for the amount, on an Australian firm. I now announced my intention to retire from my profession ; made prompt arrangements with a successor to my practice ; disposed of my two houses at L— ; fixed the day of my departure. Vanity was dead within me, or I might have been gratified by the sensation which the news of my design created. My faults became at once forgotten : such good qualities as I might possess were exaggerated. The public regret vented and consoled itself in a costly testimonial, to which even the poorest of my patients insisted on the privilege to contribute, graced with an

inscription flattering enough to have served for the epitaph on some great man's tomb. No one who has served an art and striven for a name, is a stoic to the esteem of others ; and sweet, indeed, would such honours have been to me had not publicity itself seemed a wrong to the sanctity of that affliction which set Lilian apart from the movement and the glories of the world.

The two persons most active in "getting up" this testimonial were, nominally, Colonel Poyntz—in truth, his wife—and my old disparager, Mr Vigors ! It is long since my narrative has referred to Mr Vigors. It is due to him now to state that, in his capacity of magistrate, and in his own way, he had been both active and delicate in the inquiries set on foot for Lilian during the unhappy time in which she had wandered, spellbound, from her home. He, alone, of all the more influential magnates of the town, had upheld her innocence against the gossip that aspersed it ; and during the last trying year of my residence at L——, he had sought me, with frank and manly confessions of his regret for his former prejudice against me, and assurances of the respect in which he had held me ever since my marriage—marriage but in rite—with Lilian. He had then, strong in his ruling passion, besought me to consult his clairvoyants as to her case. I declined this invitation, so as not to affront him—declined it, not as I should once have done, but with no word nor look of incredulous disdain. The fact was, that I had conceived a solemn terror of all

practices and theories out of the beaten track of sense and science. Perhaps in my refusal I did wrong. I know not. I was afraid of my own imagination. He continued not less friendly in spite of my refusal. And, such are the vicissitudes in human feeling, I parted from him whom I had regarded as my most bigoted foe with a warmer sentiment of kindness than for any of those on whom I had counted on friendship. *He* had not deserted Lilian. It was not so with Mrs Poyntz. I would have paid tenfold the value of the testimonial to have erased, from the list of those who subscribed to it, her husband's name.

The day before I quitted L——, and some weeks after I had, in fact, renounced my practice, I received an urgent entreaty from Miss Brabazon to call on her. She wrote in lines so blurred that I could with difficulty decipher them, that she was very ill, given over by Dr Jones, who had been attending her. She implored my opinion.

CHAPTER LXVII.

ON reaching the house, a formal man-servant, with indifferent face, transferred me to the guidance of a hired nurse, who led me up the stairs, and, before I was well aware of it, into the room in which Dr Lloyd had died. Widely different, indeed, the aspect of the walls, the character of the furniture. The dingy paper-hangings were replaced by airy muslins, showing a rose-coloured ground through their fanciful open-work; luxurious fauteuils, gilded wardrobes, full-length mirrors, a toilet-table tricked out with lace and ribbons, and glittering with an array of silver gewgaws and jewelled trinkets,—all transformed the sick chamber of the simple man of science to a boudoir of death for the vain coquette. But the room itself, in its high lattice and heavy ceiling, was the same—as the coffin itself has the same confines whether it be rich in velvets and bright with blazoning, or rude as a pauper's shell.

And the bed, with its silken coverlid, and its pillows edged with the thread-work of Louvain, stood in the same sharp angle as that over which had flickered the frowning smoke-reek above the dying resentful foe. As I approached, a man, who was seated beside the

sufferer, turned round his face, and gave me a silent kindly nod of recognition. He was Mr C., one of the clergy of the town, the one with whom I had the most frequently come into contact wherever the physician resigns to the priest the language that bids man hope. Mr C., as a preacher, was renowned for his touching eloquence; as a pastor, revered for his benignant piety; as friend and neighbour, beloved for a sweetness of nature which seemed to regulate all the movements of a mind eminently masculine by the beat of a heart tender as the gentlest woman's.

This good man, then whispering something to the sufferer which I did not overhear, stole towards me, took me by the hand, and said, also in a whisper, "Be merciful as Christians are." He led me to the bedside, there left me, went out, and closed the door.

"Do you think I am really dying, Dr Fenwick?" said a feeble voice. "I fear Dr Jones has misunderstood my case. I wish I had called you in at the first, but—but I could not—I could not! Will you feel my pulse? Don't you think you could do me good?"

I had no need to feel the pulse in that skeleton wrist; the aspect of the face sufficed to tell me that death was drawing near.

Mechanically, however, I went through the hackneyed formulæ of professional questions. This vain ceremony done, as gently and delicately as I could, I implied the expediency of concluding, if not yet settled, those affairs which relate to this world.

"This duty," I said, "in relieving the mind from

care for others to whom we owe the forethought of affection, often relieves the body also of many a gnawing pain, and sometimes, to the surprise of the most experienced physician, prolongs life itself."

"Ah," said the old maid, peevishly, "I understand ! But it is not my will that troubles me. I should not be left to a nurse from a hospital if my relations did not know that my annuity dies with me ; and I forestalled it in furnishing this house, Dr Fenwick, and all these pretty things will be sold to pay those horrid tradesmen !—very hard ! so hard !—just as I had got things about me in the way I always said I would have them if I could ever afford it. I always said I would have my bedroom hung with muslin, like dear Lady L.'s ; and the drawing-room in geranium-coloured silk : so pretty. You have not seen it : you would not know the house, Dr Fenwick. And just when all is finished, to be taken away, and thrust into the grave. It is so cruel !" And she began to weep. Her emotion brought on a violent paroxysm, which, when she recovered from it, had produced one of those startling changes of mind that are sometimes witnessed before death—changes whereby the whole character of a life seems to undergo solemn transformation. The hard will become gentle, the proud meek, the frivolous earnest. That awful moment when the things of earth pass away like dissolving scenes, leaving death visible on the background by the glare that shoots up in the last flicker of life's lamp.

And when she lifted her haggard face from my shoul-

der, and heard my pitying, soothing voice, it was not the grief of a trifle at the loss of fondled toys that spoke in the fallen lines of her lip, in the woe of her pleading eyes.

“So this is death,” she said. “I feel it hurrying on. I must speak. I promised Mr C. that I would. Forgive me, can you—can you? That letter—that letter to Lilian Ashleigh—I wrote it! Oh, do not look at me so terribly; I never thought it could do such evil! And am I not punished enough? I truly believed, when I wrote, that Miss Ashleigh was deceiving you, and once I was silly enough to fancy that you might have liked me. But I had another motive: I had been so poor all my life—I had become rich unexpectedly; I set my heart on this house—I had always fancied it—and I thought if I could prevent Miss Ashleigh marrying you, and scare her and her mother from coming back to L——, I could get the house. And I did get it. What for?—to die. I had not been here a week before I got the hurt that is killing me—a fall down the stairs—coming out of this very room; the stairs had been polished. If I had stayed in my old lodging, it would not have happened. Oh, say you forgive me! Say, say it, even if you do not feel you can! Say it!” And the miserable woman grasped me by the arm as Dr Lloyd had grasped me.

I shaded my averted face with my hands; my heart heaved with the agony of my suppressed passion. A wrong, however deep, only to myself, I could have pardoned without effort; *such* a wrong to Lilian,—no! I could not say, “I forgive.”

The dying wretch was perhaps more appalled by my silence than she would have been by my reproach. Her voice grew shrill in her despair.

“You will not pardon me! I shall die with your curse on my head. Mercy! mercy! That good man, Mr C., assured me you would be merciful. Have *you* never wronged another? Has the Evil One never tempted *you*?”

Then I spoke in broken accents: “Me! Oh, had it been I whom you defamed—but a young creature so harmless, so unoffending, and for so miserable a motive!”

“But I tell you, I swear to you, I never dreamed I could cause such sorrow; and that young man, that Margrave, put it into my head!”

“Margrave! He had left L—— long before that letter was written.”

“But he came back for a day, just before I wrote: it was the very day. I met him in the lane yonder. He asked after you—after Miss Ashleigh; and when he spoke he laughed, and I said, ‘Miss Ashleigh had been ill, and was gone away;’ and he laughed again. And I thought he knew more than he would tell me, so I asked him if he supposed Mrs Ashleigh would come back, and said how much I should like to take this house if she did not; and again he laughed, and said, ‘Birds never stay in the nest after the young ones are hurt,’ and went away singing. When I got home, his laugh and his song haunted me. I thought I saw him still in my room, prompting me to write, and I

sat down and wrote. Oh, pardon, pardon me ! I have been a foolish poor creature, but never meant to do such harm. The Evil One tempted me ! There he is, near me now ! I see him yonder ! there, at the doorway. He comes to claim me ! As you hope for mercy yourself, free me from him ! Forgive me !”

I made an effort over myself. In naming Margrave as her tempter, the woman had suggested an excuse, echoed from that innermost cell of my mind, which I recoiled from gazing into, for there I should behold his image. Inexpiable though the injury she had wrought against me, and mine, still the woman was human—fellow-creature—like myself ;—but HE ?

I took the pale hand that still pressed my arm, and said, with firm voice,—

“Be comforted. In the name of Lilian, my wife, I forgive you for her and for me as freely and as fully as we are enjoined by Him, against whose precepts the best of us daily sin, to forgive—we children of wrath—to forgive one another !”

“Heaven bless you !—oh, bless you !” she murmured, sinking back upon her pillow.

“Ah !” thought I, “what if the pardon I grant for a wrong far deeper than I inflicted on him whose imprecation smote me in this chamber, should indeed be received as atonement, and this blessing on the lips of the dying annul the dark curse that the dead has left on my path through the Valley of the Shadow ?”

I left my patient sleeping quietly,—the sleep that precedes the last. As I went down the stairs into the

hall, I saw Mrs Poyntz standing at the threshold, speaking to the man-servant and the nurse.

I would have passed her with a formal bow, but she stopped me.

"I came to inquire after poor Miss Brabazon," said she. "You can tell me more than the servants can: is there no hope?"

"Let the nurse go up and watch beside her. She may pass away in the sleep into which she has fallen."

"Allen Fenwick, I must speak with you—nay, but for a few minutes. I hear that you leave L—— tomorrow. It is scarcely among the chances of life that we should meet again." While thus saying, she drew me along the lawn down the path that led towards her own home. "I wish," said she, earnestly, "that you could part with a kindlier feeling towards me; but I can scarcely expect it. Could I put myself in your place, and be moved by your feelings, I know that I should be implacable; but I——"

"But you, madam, are The World! and the World governs itself, and dictates to others, by laws which seem harsh to those who ask from its favour the services which the World cannot tender, for the World admits favourites but ignores friends. You did but act to me as the World ever acts to those who mistake its favour for its friendship."

"It is true," said Mrs Poyntz, with blunt candour; and we continued to walk on silently. At length she said, abruptly, "But do you not rashly deprive yourself

of your only consolation in sorrow? When the heart suffers, does your skill admit any remedy like occupation to the mind? Yet you abandon that occupation to which your mind is most accustomed; you desert your career; you turn aside, in the midst of the race, from the fame which awaits at the goal; you go back from civilisation itself, and dream that all your intellectual cravings can find content in the life of a herdsman, amidst the monotony of a wild. No, you will repent, for you are untrue to your mind!"

"I am sick of the word 'mind'!" said I, bitterly. And therewith I relapsed into musing.

The enigmas which had foiled my intelligence in the unravelled Sibyl Book of Nature were mysteries strange to every man's normal practice of thought, even if reducible to the fraudulent impressions of outward sense: for illusions in a brain otherwise healthy, suggest problems in our human organisation which the colleges that record them rather guess at than solve. But the blow which had shattered my life had been dealt by the hand of a fool. Here, there were no mystic enchantments. Motives the most commonplace and paltry, suggested to a brain as trivial and shallow as ever made the frivolity of woman a theme for the satire of poets, had sufficed, in devastating the field of my affections, to blast the uses for which I had cultured my mind; and had my intellect been as great as heaven ever gave to man, it would have been as vain a shield as mine against the shaft that had lodged in my heart. While I had, indeed, been preparing

my reason and my fortitude to meet such perils, weird and marvellous as those by which tales round the winter fireside scare the credulous child, a contrivance so vulgar and hackneyed that not a day passes but what some hearth is vexed by an anonymous libel had wrought a calamity more dread than aught which my dark guess into the Shadow-Land unpierced by Philosophy could trace to the prompting of malignant witchcraft. So, ever this truth runs through all legends of ghost and demon—through the uniform records of what wonder accredits and science rejects as the supernatural—lo! the dread machinery whose wheels roll through Hades! What need such awful engines for such mean results? The first blockhead we meet in our walk to our grocer's can tell us more than the ghost tells us; the poorest envy we ever aroused hurts us more than the demon. How true an interpreter is Genius to Hell as to Earth! The Fiend comes to Faust, the tired seeker of knowledge. Heaven and Hell stake their cause in the Mortal's temptation. And what does the Fiend to astonish the Mortal? Turn wine into fire, turn love into crime. We need no Mephistopheles to accomplish these marvels every day!

Thus silently thinking, I walked by the side of the world-wise woman; and when she next spoke, I looked up, and saw that we were at the Monk's Well, where I had first seen Lilian gazing into heaven!

Mrs Poyntz had, as we walked, placed her hand on my arm, and, turning abruptly from the path into the

glade, I found myself standing by her side in the scene where a new sense of being had first disclosed to my sight the hues with which Love, the passionate beautifier, turns into purple and gold the grey of the common air. Thus, when romance has ended in sorrow, and the Beautiful fades from the landscape, the trite and positive forms of life, banished for a time, reappear, and deepen our mournful remembrance of the glories they replace. And the Woman of the World, finding how little I was induced to respond to her when she had talked of myself, began to speak, in her habitual, clear, ringing accents, of her own social schemes and devices :—

“I shall miss you when you are gone, Allen Fenwick; for though, during the last year or so, all actual intercourse between us has ceased, yet my interest in you gave some occupation to my thoughts when I sat alone—having lost my main object of ambition in settling my daughter, and having no longer any one in the house with whom I could talk of the future, or for whom I could form a project. It is so wearisome to count the changes which pass within us, that we take interest in the changes that pass without. Poyntz still has his weather-glass; I have no longer my Jane.”

“I cannot linger with you on this spot,” said I, impatiently turning back into the path; she followed, treading over fallen leaves. And unheeding my interruption, she thus continued her hard talk :—

“But I am not sick of my mind as you seem to be

of yours ; I am only somewhat tired of the little cage in which, since it has been alone, it ruffles its plumes against the flimsy wires that confine it from wider space. I shall take up my home for a time with the new-married couple : they want me. Ashleigh Sumner has come into Parliament. He means to attend regularly and work hard, but he does not like Jane to go into the world by herself, and he wishes her to go into the world, because he wants a wife to display his wealth for the improvement of his position. In Ashleigh Sumner's house I shall have ample scope for my energies, such as they are. I have a curiosity to see the few that perch on the wheels of the state, and say, 'It is we who move the wheels !' It will amuse me to learn if I can maintain in a capital the authority I have won in a country town ; if not, I can but return to my small principality. Wherever I live I must sway, not serve. If I succeed—as I ought, for in Jane's beauty and Ashleigh's fortune I have materials for the woof of ambition, wanting which here, I fall asleep over my knitting—if I succeed, there will be enough to occupy the rest of my life. Ashleigh Sumner must be a Power : the Power will be represented and enjoyed by my child, and created and maintained by me ! Allen Fenwick, do as I do. Be world with the world, and it will only be in moments of spleen and chagrin that you will sigh to think that the heart may be void when the mind is full. Confess you envy me while you listen."

"Not so ; all that to you seems so great, appears to

me so small ! Nature alone is always grand, in her terrors as well as her charms. The World for you, Nature for me. Farewell ! ”

“ Nature,” said Mrs Poyntz, compassionately. “ Poor Allen Fenwick ! Nature indeed—intellectual suicide ! Nay, shake hands, then, if for the last time.”

So we shook hands and parted, where the wicket-gate and the stone stairs separated my blighted fairy-land from the common thoroughfare.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THAT night, as I was employed in collecting the books and manuscripts which I proposed to take with me, including my long-suspended physiological work, and such standard authorities as I might want to consult or refer to in the portions yet incompleated, my servant entered to inform me, in answer to the inquiries I had sent him to make, that Miss Brabazon had peacefully breathed her last an hour before. Well ! my pardon had perhaps soothed her last moments : but how unavailing her deathbed repentance to undo the wrong she had done !

I turned from that thought, and, glancing at the work into which I had thrown all my learning, methodised into system with all my art, I recalled the pity which Mrs Poyntz had expressed for my meditated waste of mind. The tone of superiority which this incarnation of common sense, accompanied by uncommon will, assumed over all that was too deep or too high for her comprehension, had sometimes amused me ; thinking over it now, it piqued. I said to myself, “ After all, I shall bear with me such solace as intellectual occupation can afford. I shall have leisure

to complete this labour, and a record that I have lived and thought may outlast all the honours which worldly ambition may bestow upon an Ashleigh Sumner!" And as I so murmured, my hand, mechanically selecting the books I needed, fell on the Bible that Julius Faber had given to me.

It opened at the Second Book of Esdras, which our Church places amongst the Apocrypha, and is generally considered by scholars to have been written in the first or second century of the Christian era.* But in which the questions raised by man in the remotest ages, to which we can trace back his desire "to comprehend the ways of the Most High," are invested with a grandeur of thought and sublimity of word to which I know of no parallel in writers we call profane.

My eye fell on this passage in the lofty argument between the Angel whose name was Uriel, and the Prophet, perplexed by his own cravings for knowledge:

"He (the Angel) answered me, and said, I went into a forest into a plain, and the trees took counsel,

"And said, Come, let us go and make war against the sea, that it may depart away before us, and that we may make us more woods.

"The floods of the sea also in like manner took counsel, and said, Come, let us go up and subdue the woods of the plain, that there also we may make us another country.

* Such is the supposition of Jahn. Dr Lee, however, is of opinion that the author was contemporary, and, indeed, identical, with the author of the Book of Enoch.

“The thought of the wood was in vain, for the fire came and consumed it.

“The thought of the floods of the sea came likewise to nought, for the sand stood up and stopped them.

“If thou wert judge now betwixt these two, whom wouldst thou begin to justify? or whom wouldst thou condemn?

“I answered and said, Verily it is a foolish thought that they both have devised; for the ground is given unto the wood, and the sea also hath his place to bear his floods.

“Then answered he me, and said, Thou hast given a right judgment; but why judgest thou not thyself also?

“For like as the ground is given unto the wood, and the sea to his floods: even so they that dwell upon the earth may understand nothing but that which is upon the earth: and He that dwelleth above the heavens may only understand the things that are above the height of the heavens.”

I paused at those words, and, closing the Sacred Volume, fell into deep unquiet thought.

CHAPTER LXIX.

I HAD hoped that the voyage would produce some beneficial effect upon Lilian; but no effect, good or bad, was perceptible, except, perhaps, a deeper silence, a gentler calm. She loved to sit on the deck when the nights were fair, and the stars mirrored on the deep. And once, thus, as I stood beside her, bending over the rail of the vessel, and gazing on the long wake of light which the moon made amidst the darkness of an ocean to which no shore could be seen, I said to myself, "Where is my track of light through the measureless future? Would that I could believe as I did when a child! Woe is me that all the reasonings I take from my knowledge should lead me away from the comfort which the peasant who mourns finds in faith! Why should riddles so dark have been thrust upon me?—me, no fond child of fancy; me, sober pupil of schools the severest. Yet what marvel—the strangest my senses have witnessed or feigned in the fraud they have palmed on me—is greater than that by which a simple affection, that all men profess to have known, has changed the courses of life prearranged by my hopes and confirmed by my judgment? How calmly before I knew love I have anatomised its

mechanism, as the tyro who dissects the webwork of tissues and nerves in the dead ! Lo ! it lives, lives in me ; and, in living, escapes from my scalpel and mocks all my knowledge. Can love be reduced to the realm of the senses ? No ; what nun is more barred by her grate from the realm of the senses than my bride by her solemn affliction ? Is love, then, the union of kindred, harmonious minds ? No ; my beloved one sits by my side, and I guess not her thoughts, and my mind is to her a sealed fountain. Yet I love her more—oh, ineffably more ! for the doom which destroys the two causes philosophy assigns to love—in the form, in the mind ! How can I now, in my vain physiology, say what is love—what is not ? Is it love which must tell me that a man has a soul, and that in soul will be found the solution of problems never to be solved in body or mind alone ? ”

My self-questionings halted here, as Lilian’s hand touched my shoulder. She had risen from her seat, and had come to me.

“ Are not the stars very far from earth ? ” she said.

“ Very far.”

“ Are they seen for the first time to-night ? ”

“ They were seen, I presume, as we see them, by the fathers of all human races ! ”

“ Yet close below us they shine reflected in the waters, and yet, see, wave flows on wave before we can count it ! ”

“ Lilian, by what sympathy do you read and answer my thought ? ”

Her reply was incoherent and meaningless. If a gleam of intelligence had mysteriously lighted my heart to her view, it was gone. But drawing her nearer towards me, my eye long followed wistfully the path of light, dividing the darkness on either hand, till it closed in the sloping horizon.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE voyage is over. At the seaport at which we landed I found a letter from Faber. My instructions had reached him in time to effect the purchase on which his descriptions had fixed my desire. The stock, the implements of husbandry, the furniture of the house, were included in the purchase. All was prepared for my arrival, and I hastened from the then miserable village, which may some day rise into one of the mightiest capitals of the world, to my lodge in the wilderness.

It was the burst of the Australian spring, which commences in our autumn month of October. The air was loaded with the perfume of the acacias. Amidst the glades of the open forest land, or climbing the craggy banks of winding silvery creeks,* creepers and flowers of dazzling hue contrasted the olive-green of the surrounding foliage. The exhilarating effect of the climate in that season heightens the charm of the strange scenery. In the brilliancy of the sky, in the lightness of the atmosphere, the sense of life is won-

* Creek is the name given by Australian colonists to precarious watercourses and tributary streams.

drously quickened. With the very breath the Adventurer draws in from the racy air, he feels as if inhaling hope.

We have reached our home—we are settled in it; the early unfamiliar impressions are worn away. We have learned to dispense with much that we at first missed, and are reconciled to much that at first disappointed or displeased.

The house is built but of logs—the late proprietor had commenced, upon a rising ground a mile distant, a more imposing edifice of stone; but it is not half finished.

This log-house is commodious, and much has been done, within and without, to conceal or adorn its primitive rudeness. It is of irregular, picturesque form, with verandahs round three sides of it, to which the grape-vine has been trained, with glossy leaves that clamber up to the gable roof. There is a large garden in front, in which many English fruit-trees have been set, and grow fast amongst the plants of the tropics and the orange-trees of Southern Europe. Beyond, stretch undulous pastures, studded not only with sheep, but with herds of cattle, which my speculative predecessor had bred from parents of famous stock, and imported from England at mighty cost; but as yet the herds have been of little profit, and they range their luxuriant expanse of pasture with as little heed. To the left, soar up, in long range, the many-coloured hills; to the right meanders a creek, belted by feathery trees; and on its opposite bank a forest opens, through

frequent breaks, into park-like glades and alleys. The territory, of which I so suddenly find myself the lord, is vast, even for a colonial capitalist.

It had been originally purchased as "a special survey," comprising twenty thousand acres, with the privilege of pasture over forty thousand more. In very little of this land, though it includes some of the most fertile districts in the known world, has cultivation been even commenced. At the time I entered into possession even sheep were barely profitable; labour was scarce and costly. Regarded as a speculation, I could not wonder that my predecessor fled in fear from his domain. Had I invested the bulk of my capital in this lordly purchase, I should have deemed myself a ruined man; but a villa near London, with a hundred acres, would have cost me as much to buy, and thrice as much to keep up. I could afford the investment I had made. I found a Scotch bailiff already on the estate, and I was contented to escape from rural occupations, to which I brought no experience, by making it worth his while to serve me with zeal. Two domestics of my own, and two who had been for many years with Mrs Ashleigh, had accompanied us: they remained faithful, and seemed contented. So the clockwork of our mere household arrangements went on much the same as in our native home. Lilian was not subjected to the ordinary privations and discomforts that await the wife even of the wealthy emigrant. Alas! would she have heeded them if she had been?

The change of scene wrought a decided change for

the better in her health and spirits, but not such as implied a dawn of reviving reason. But her countenance was now more rarely overcast. Its usual aspect was glad with a soft mysterious smile. She would murmur snatches of songs that were partly borrowed from English poets, and partly glided away into what seemed spontaneous additions of her own—wanting intelligible meaning, but never melody nor rhyme. Strange, that memory and imitation—the two earliest parents of all inventive knowledge—should still be so active, and judgment—the after faculty, that combines the rest into purpose and method—be annulled !

Julius Faber I see continually, though his residence is a few miles distant. He is sanguine as to Lilian's ultimate recovery ; and, to my amazement and to my envy, he has contrived, by some art which I cannot attain, to establish between her and himself intelligible communion. She comprehends his questions, when mine, though the simplest, seem to her in unknown language ; and he construes into sense her words, that to me are meaningless riddles.

“ I was right,” he said to me one day, leaving her seated in the garden beside her quiet patient mother, and joining me where I lay—listless yet fretful—under the shadeless gum-trees, gazing not on the flocks and fields that I could call my own, but on the far mountain range, from which the arch of the horizon seemed to spring ;—“ I was right,” said the great physician ; “ this is reason suspended, not reason lost. Your wife will recover ; but——”

“ But what ? ”

“ Give me your arm as I walk homeward, and I will tell you the conclusion to which I have come.”

I rose, the old man leant on me, and we went down the valley, along the craggy ridges of the winding creek. The woodland on the opposite bank was vocal with the chirp, and croak, and chatter of Australian birds—all mirthful, all songless, save that sweetest of warblers, which some early irreverent emigrant degraded to the name of magpie, but whose note is sweeter than the nightingale's, and trills through the lucent air with a distinct ecstatic melody of joy that dominates all the discords ;—so ravishing the sense, that, while it sings, the ear scarcely heeds the scream of the parrots.

CHAPTER LXXI.

“You may remember,” said Julius Faber, “Sir Humphry Davy’s eloquent description of the effect produced on him by the inhalation of nitrous oxide. He states that he began to lose the perception of external things: trains of vivid visible images rapidly passed through his mind, and were connected with words in such a manner as to produce perceptions perfectly novel. ‘I existed,’ he says, ‘in a world of newly-connected and newly-modified ideas!’ When he recovered, he exclaimed: ‘Nothing exists but thoughts; the universe is composed of impressions, ideas, pleasures, and pains!’

“Now observe, that thus, a cultivator of positive science, endowed with one of the healthiest of human brains, is, by the inhalation of a gas, abstracted from all external life—enters into a new world, which consists of images he himself creates, and animates so vividly, that, on waking, he resolves the universe itself into thoughts.”

“Well,” said I, “but what inference do you draw from that voluntary experiment, applicable to the malady of which you bid me hope the cure?”

“Simply this: that the effect produced on a health-

ful brain by the nitrous oxide may be produced also by moral causes operating on the blood, or on the nerves. There is a degree of mental excitement in which ideas are more vivid than sensations, and then the world of external things gives way to the world within the brain.* But this, though a suspension of that reason which comprehends accuracy of judgment, is no more a permanent aberration of reason than were Sir Humphry Davy's visionary ecstasies under the influence of the gas. The difference between the two states of suspension is that of time, and it is but an affair of time with our beloved patient. Yet prepare yourself. I fear that the mind will not recover without some critical malady of the body!"

"Critical! but not dangerous?—say not dangerous. I can endure the pause of her reason; I could not endure the void in the universe if her life were to fade from the earth."

"Poor friend! would not you yourself rather lose life than reason?"

"I—yes! But we men are taught to set cheap value on our own lives; we do not estimate at the same rate the lives of those we love. Did we do so, Humanity would lose its virtues."

"What, then! Love teaches that there is something of nobler value than mere mind? Yet surely it cannot be the mere body? What is it, if not that continuance of being which your philosophy declines

* See, on the theory elaborated from this principle, Dr Hibbert's interesting and valuable work on the 'Philosophy of Apparitions.'

to acknowledge—viz., SOUL? If you fear so painfully that your Lilian should die, is it not that you fear to lose her for ever?”

“Oh, cease, cease!” I cried, impatiently. “I cannot now argue on metaphysics. What is it that you anticipate of harm to her life? Her health has been stronger ever since her affliction. She never seems to know aliment now. Do you not perceive that her cheek has a more hardy bloom, her frame a more rounded symmetry, than when you saw her in England?”

“Unquestionably. Her physical forces have been silently recruiting themselves in the dreams which half lull, half amuse her imagination. IMAGINATION! that faculty, the most glorious which is bestowed on the human mind, because it is the faculty which enables thought to create, is of all others the most exhausting to life when unduly stimulated, and consciously reasoning on its own creations. I think it probable that, had this sorrow not befallen you, you would have known a sorrow yet graver—you would have long survived your Lilian. As it is now, when she recovers, her whole organisation, physical and mental, will have undergone a beneficent change. But, I repeat my prediction—some severe malady of the body will precede the restoration of the mind; and it is my hope that the present suspense or aberration of the more wearing powers of the mind may fit the body to endure and surmount the physical crisis. I remember a case, within my own professional experience, in many respects similar to this, but in other respects it was less hopeful.

I was consulted by a young student of a very delicate physical frame, of great mental energies, and consumed by an intense ambition. He was reading for university honours. He would not listen to me when I entreated him to rest his mind. I thought that he was certain to obtain the distinction for which he toiled, and equally certain to die a few months after obtaining it. He falsified both my prognostics. He so overworked himself that, on the day of examination, his nerves were agitated, his memory failed him; he passed, not without a certain credit, but fell far short of the rank amongst his fellow-competitors to which he aspired. Here, then, the irritated mind acted on the disappointed heart, and raised a new train of emotions. He was first visited by spectral illusions; then he sank into a state in which the external world seemed quite blotted out. He heeded nothing that was said to him; seemed to see nothing that was placed before his eyes; in a word, sensations became dormant, ideas preconceived usurped their place, and those ideas gave him pleasure. He believed that his genius was recognised, and lived amongst its supposed creations, enjoying an imaginary fame. So it went on for two years; during which suspense of his reason his frail form became robust and vigorous. At the end of that time he was seized with a fever, which would have swept him in three days to the grave had it occurred when I was first called in to attend him. He conquered the fever, and, in recovering, acquired the full possession of the intellectual faculties so long suspended. When I last

saw him, many years afterwards, he was in perfect health, and the object of his young ambition was realised; the body had supported the mind—he had achieved distinction. Now what had so, for a time, laid this strong intellect into visionary sleep? the most agonising of human emotions in a noble spirit—shame! What has so stricken down your Lilian? You have told me the story: shame!—the shame of a nature pre-eminently pure. But observe that, in his case as in hers, the shock inflicted does not produce a succession of painful illusions: on the contrary, in both, the illusions are generally pleasing. Had the illusions been painful, the body would have suffered—the patient died. Why did a painful shock produce pleasing illusions? because, no matter how a shock on the nerves may originate, if it affects the reason it does but make more vivid, than impressions from actual external objects, the ideas previously most cherished. Such ideas in the young student were ideas of earthly fame; such ideas in the young maiden are ideas of angel comforters and heavenly Edens. You miss her mind on the earth, and, while we speak, it is in paradise.”

“Much that you say, my friend, is authorised by the speculations of great writers, with whom I am not unfamiliar: but in none of those writers, nor in your encouraging words, do I find a solution for much that has no precedents in my experience—much, indeed, that has analogies in my reading, but analogies which I have hitherto despised as old wives’ fables. I have bared to your searching eye the weird mysteries of my

life. How do you account for facts which you cannot resolve into illusions? for the influence which that strange being, Margrave, exercised over Lilian's mind or fancy, so that for a time her love for me was as dormant as is her reason now: so that he could draw her—her whose nature you admit to be singularly pure and modest—from her mother's home? The magic wand! the trance into which that wand threw Margrave himself; the apparition which it conjured up in my own quiet chamber, when my mind was without a care and my health without a flaw. How account for all this—as you endeavoured, and perhaps successfully, to account for all my impressions of the Vision in the Museum, of the luminous haunting shadow in its earlier apparitions, when my fancy was heated, my heart tormented, and, it might be, even the physical forces of this strong frame disordered?"

"Allen," said the old pathologist, "here we approach a ground which few physicians have dared to examine. Honour to those who, like our bold contemporary, Elliotson, have braved scoff and sacrificed dress in seeking to extract what is practical in uses, what can be tested by experiment, from those exceptional phenomena on which magic sought to found a philosophy, and to which philosophy tracks the origin of magic!"

"What! Do I understand you? Is it you, Julius Faber, who attach faith to the wonders attributed to animal magnetism and electro-biology, or subscribe to the doctrines which their practitioners teach?"

“I have not examined into those doctrines, nor seen with my own eyes the wonders recorded, upon evidence too respectable, nevertheless, to permit me peremptorily to deny what I have not witnessed.* But wherever I look through the History of Mankind in

* What Faber here says is expressed with more authority by one of the most accomplished metaphysicians of our time (Sir W. Hamilton):—

“Somnambulism is a phenomenon still more astonishing (than dreaming). In this singular state a person performs a regular series of rational actions, and those frequently of the most difficult and delicate nature; and, what is still more marvellous, with a talent to which he could make no pretension when awake. (Cr. Ancillon, ‘*Essais Philos.*,’ ii. 161.) His memory and reminiscence supply him with recollections of words and things which, perhaps, never were at his disposal in the ordinary state—he speaks more fluently a more refined language. And if we are to credit what the evidence on which it rests hardly allows us to disbelieve, he has not only perception of things through other channels than the common organs of sense, but the sphere of his cognition is amplified to an extent far beyond the limits to which sensible perception is confined. This subject is one of the most perplexing in the whole compass of philosophy; for, on the one hand, the phenomena are so remarkable that they cannot be believed, and yet, on the other, they are of so unambiguous and palpable a character, and the witnesses to their reality are so numerous, so intelligent, and so high above every suspicion of deceit, that it is equally impossible to deny credit to what is attested by such ample and unexceptionable evidence.”—Sir W. Hamilton’s ‘*Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*,’ vol. ii. p. 274.

This perplexity, in which the distinguished philosopher leaves the judgment so equally balanced that it finds it impossible to believe, and yet impossible to disbelieve, forms the right state of mind in which a candid thinker should come to the examination of those more extraordinary phenomena which he has not himself yet witnessed, but the fair inquiry into which may be tendered to him by persons above the imputation of quackery and fraud. Müller, who is not the least determined, as he is certainly one of the most distinguished disbelievers of mesmeric phenomena, does not appear

all ages and all races, I find a concurrence in certain beliefs which seems to countenance the theory that there is in some peculiar and rare temperaments a power over forms of animated organisation, with which they establish some unaccountable affinity ; and even, though much more rarely, a power over inanimate matter. You are familiar with the theory of Descartes, ‘that those particles of the blood which penetrate to the brain do not only serve to nourish and sustain its substance, but to produce there a certain very subtle Aura, or rather a flame very vivid and pure, that obtains the name of the Animal Spirits;’* and at the close of his great fragment upon Man, he asserts that ‘this flame is of no other nature than all the fires which are in inanimate bodies.’† This notion does but forestall the more recent doctrine that electricity is more or less in all, or nearly all, known matter. Now, whether in

to have witnessed, or at least to have carefully examined them, or he would, perhaps, have seen that even the more extraordinary of these phenomena confirm, rather than contradict, his own general theories, and may be explained by the sympathies one sense has with another—“the laws of reflection through the medium of the brain.” (‘Physiology of Senses,’ p. 1311.) And again by the maxim—“that the mental principle, or cause of the mental phenomena, cannot be confined to the brain, but that it exists in a latent state in every part of the organism.” (Ibid., p. 1355.) The “nerve power,” contended for by Mr Bain, also may suggest a rational solution of much that has seemed incredible to those physiologists who have not condescended to sift the genuine phenomena of mesmerism from the imposture to which, in all ages, the phenomena exhibited by what may be called the ecstastic temperament, have been applied.

* Descartes, ‘L’Homme,’ vol. iv. p. 345 (Cousin’s edition).

† Ibid., p. 428.

the electric fluid or some other fluid akin to it of which we know still less, thus equally pervading all matter, there may be a certain magnetic property more active, more operative upon sympathy in some human constitutions than in others, and which can account for the mysterious power I have spoken of, is a query I might suggest, but not an opinion I would hazard. For an opinion I must have that basis of experience or authority which I do not need when I submit a query to the experience and authority of others. Still the supposition conveyed in the query is so far worthy of notice, that the ecstatic temperament (in which phrase I comprehend all constitutional mystics) is peculiarly sensitive to electric atmospheric influences. This is a fact which most medical observers will have remarked in the range of their practice. Accordingly, I was prepared to find Mr Hare Townshend, in his interesting work,* state that he himself was of 'the electric temperament,' sparks flying from his hair when combed in the dark, &c. That accomplished writer, whose veracity no one would impugn, affirms, that 'between this electrical endowment and whatever mesmeric properties he might possess, there is a remarkable relationship and parallelism. Whatever state of the atmosphere tends to accumulate and insulate electricity in the body, promotes equally (says Mr Townshend) the power and facility with which I influence others mesmerically.' What Mr Townshend thus observes in himself, American physicians and professors of chem-

* 'Facts in Mesmerism.'

istry depose to have observed in those modern magicians, the mediums of (so-called) ‘spirit manifestation.’ They state that all such mediums are of the electric temperament, thus everywhere found allied with the ecstatic, and their power varies in proportion as the state of the atmosphere serves to depress or augment the electricity stored in themselves. Here, then, in the midst of vagrant phenomena, either too hastily dismissed as altogether the tricks of fraudulent imposture, or too credulously accepted as supernatural portents—here, at least, in one generalised fact, we may, perhaps, find a starting-point, from which inductive experiment may arrive soon, or late, at a rational theory. But, however the power of which we are speaking (a power accorded to special physical temperament) may or may not be accounted for by some patient student of nature, I am persuaded that it is in that power we are to seek for whatever is not wholly imposture, in the attributes assigned to magic or witchcraft. It is well said, by a writer who has gone into the depth of these subjects with the research of a scholar and the science of a pathologist, ‘that if magic had exclusively reposed on credulity and falsehood, its reign would never have endured so long; but that its art took its origin in singular phenomena, proper to certain affections of the nerves, or manifested in the conditions of sleep. These phenomena, the principle of which was at first unknown, served to root faith in magic, and often abused even enlightened minds. The enchanters and magicians arrived, by divers practices, at the faculty

of provoking in other brains a determined order of dreams, of engendering hallucinations of all kinds, of inducing fits of hypnotism, trance, mania, during which the persons so affected imagined that they saw, heard, touched supernatural beings, conversed with them, proved their influences, assisted at prodigies of which magic proclaimed itself to possess the secret. The public, the enchanters, and the enchanted were equally dupes.* Accepting this explanation, unintelligible to no physician of a practice so lengthened as mine has been, I draw from it the corollary that, as these phenomena are exhibited only by certain special affections, to which only certain special constitutions are susceptible, so not in any superior faculties of intellect, or of spiritual endowment, but in peculiar physical temperaments, often strangely disordered, the power of the sorcerer in affecting the imagination of others is to be sought. In the native tribes of Australasia the elders are instructed in the arts of this so-called sorcery, but only in a very few constitutions does instruction avail to produce effects in which the savages recognise the powers of the sorcerer: it is so with the Obi of the negroes. The fascination of Obi is an unquestionable fact, but the Obi man cannot be trained by formal lessons; he is born a fascinator, as a poet is born a poet. It is so with the Laplanders, of whom Tornæus reports that of those instructed in the magical art 'only a few are

* 'La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen-Age.'
Par L. F. Alfred Maury, Membre de l'Institut. P. 225.

capable of it.' 'Some,' he says, 'are naturally magicians.' And this fact is emphatically insisted upon by the mystics of our own middle ages, who state that a man must be *born* a magician; in other words, that the gift is constitutional, though developed by practice and art. Now, that this gift and its practice should principally obtain in imperfect states of civilisation, and fade into insignificance in the busy social enlightenment of cities, may be accounted for by reference to the known influences of imagination. In the cruder states of social life not only is imagination more frequently predominant over all other faculties, but it has not the healthful vents which the intellectual competition of cities and civilisation affords. The man who in a savage tribe, or in the dark feudal ages, would be a magician, is in our century a poet, an orator, a daring speculator, an inventive philosopher. In other words, his imagination is drawn to pursuits congenial to those amongst whom it works. It is the tendency of all intellect to follow the directions of the public opinion amidst which it is trained. Where a magician is held in reverence or awe, there will be more practitioners of magic than where a magician is despised as an impostor or shut up as a lunatic. In Scandinavia, before the introduction of Christianity, all tradition records the wonderful powers of the Vala, or witch, who was then held in reverence and honour. Christianity was introduced, and the early Church denounced the Vala as the instrument of Satan, and from that moment down dropped the

majestic prophetess into a miserable and execrated old hag !”

“The ideas you broach,” said I, musingly, “have at moments crossed me, though I have shrunk from reducing them to a theory which is but one of pure hypothesis. But this magic, after all, then, you would place in the imagination of the operator, acting on the imagination of those whom it affects? Here, at least, I can follow you to a certain extent, for here we get back into the legitimate realm of physiology.”

“And possibly,” said Faber, “we may find hints to guide us to useful examination, if not to complete solution, of problems that, once demonstrated, may lead to discoveries of infinite value—hints, I say, in two writers of widely opposite genius—Van Helmont and Bacon. Van Helmont, of all the medieval mystics, is, in spite of his many extravagant whims, the one whose intellect is the most suggestive to the disciplined reasoners of our day. He supposed that the faculty which he calls Phantasy, and which we familiarly call Imagination, is invested with the power of creating for itself ideas independent of the senses, each idea clothed in a form fabricated by the imagination, and becoming an operative entity. This notion is so far favoured by modern physiologists, that Lincke reports a case where the eye itself was extirpated, yet the extirpation was followed by the appearance of luminous figures before the orbit. And again, a woman, stone-blind, complained of ‘luminous images, with pale colours, before her eyes.’ Abercrombie

mentions the case ‘of a lady quite blind, her eyes being also disorganised and sunk, who never walked out without seeing a little old woman in a red cloak who seemed to walk before her.’* Your favourite authority, the illustrious Müller, who was himself in the habit of ‘seeing different images in the field of vision when he lay quietly down to sleep,’ asserts that these images are not merely presented to the fancy, but that ‘even the images of dreams *are really seen,*’ and that ‘any one may satisfy himself of this by accustoming himself regularly to open his eyes when waking after a dream—the images seen in the dream are then sometimes visible, and can be observed to disappear gradually.’ He confirms this statement, not only by the result of his own experience, but by the observations made by Spinoza, and the yet higher authority of Aristotle, who accounts for spectral appearance as *the internal action of the sense of vision.*† And this opinion is favoured by Sir David Brewster, whose experience leads him to suggest ‘that the objects of mental contemplation may be seen as distinctly as external objects, and will occupy the same local position in the axis of vision as if they had been formed by the agency of light.’ Be this as it may, one

* She had no illusions when within doors.—Abercrombie ‘On the Intellectual Powers,’ p. 277 (15th edition).

† Müller, ‘Physiology of the Senses,’ Baley’s translation, pp. 1068-1395, and elsewhere. Mr Bain, in his thoughtful and suggestive work on the Senses and Intellect, makes very powerful use of these statements in support of his proposition, which Faber advances in other words, viz., “the return of the nervous currents exactly on their old track in revived sensations.”

fact remains, that images can be seen even by the blind as distinctly and vividly as you and I now see the stream below our feet, and the opossums at play upon yonder boughs. Let us come next to some remarkable suggestions of Lord Bacon. In his 'Natural History,' treating of the force of the imagination, and the help it receives 'by one man working by another,' he cites an instance he had witnessed of a kind of juggler, who could tell a person what card he thought of. He mentioned this 'to a pretended learned man, curious in such things,' and this sage said to him, 'It is not the knowledge of the man's thought, for that is proper to God, but the enforcing of a thought upon him, and binding his imagination by a stronger, so that he could think of no other card.' You see this sage anticipated our modern electro-biologists! And the learned man then shrewdly asked Lord Bacon, 'Did the juggler tell the card to the man himself who had thought of it, or bid another tell it?' 'He bade another tell it.' answered Lord Bacon. 'I thought so,' returned his learned acquaintance, 'for the juggler himself could not have put on so strong an imagination; but by telling the card to the other, who believed the juggler was some strange man who could do strange things, that other man caught a strong imagination.'* The

* Perhaps it is for the reason suggested in the text—viz., that the magician requires the interposition of a third imagination between his own and that of the consulting believer—that any learned adept in (so-called) magic will invariably refuse to exhibit without the presence of a third person. Hence the author of '*Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*,' printed at Paris, 1852-53—a book less

whole story is worth reading, because Lord Bacon evidently thinks it conveys a guess worth examining. And Lord Bacon, were he now living, would be the man to solve the mysteries that branch out of mesmerism or (so-called) spiritual manifestation, for he would not pretend to despise their phenomena for fear of hurting his reputation for good sense. Bacon then goes on to state that there are three ways to fortify the imagination : 'First, authority derived from belief in an art, and in the man who exercises it ; secondly, means to quicken and corroborate the imagination ; thirdly, means to repeat and refresh it.' For the second and the third he refers to the practices of magic, and proceeds afterwards to state on what things imagination has most force : 'upon things that have the lightest and easiest motions, and, therefore, above all, upon the spirits of men, and, in them, on such affections as move lightest—in love, in fear, in irresolution. And,' adds Bacon, earnestly, in a very different spirit from that which dictates to the sages of our time the philosophy of rejecting without trial that which belongs to the Marvellous, 'and whatsoever is of this kind should be *thoroughly inquired into*.' And this great founder or renovator of the sober inductive system of investigation, even so far leaves it a matter of speculative inquiry whether imagination may

remarkable for its learning than for the earnest belief of a scholar of our own day in the reality of the art of which he records the history—insists much on the necessity of rigidly observing Le Ternaire in the number of persons who assist in an enchanter's experiments.

not be so powerful that it can actually operate upon a plant, that he says—‘This likewise should be made upon plants, and that diligently, as if you should tell a man that such a tree would die this year, and *will* him, at these and these times, to go unto it and see how it thriveth.’ I presume that no philosopher has followed such recommendations: had some great philosopher done so, possibly we should by this time know all the secrets of what is popularly called witchcraft.”

And as Faber here paused there came a strange laugh from the fantastic she-oak-tree overhanging the stream—a wild, impish laugh.

“Pooh ! it is but the great kingfisher, the laughing-bird of the Australian bush,” said Julius Faber, amused at my start of superstitious alarm.

We walked on for some minutes in musing silence, and the rude log-hut in which my wise companion had his home came in view—the flocks grazing on undulous pastures, the kine drinking at a watercourse fringed by the slender gum-trees, and a few fields, laboriously won from the luxuriant grass-land, rippling with the wave of corn.

I halted, and said, “Rest here for a few moments, till I gather up the conclusions to which your speculative reasoning seems to invite me.”

We sat down on a rocky crag, half mantled by luxuriant creepers with vermilion buds.

“From the guesses,” said I, “which you have drawn from the erudition of others, and your own ingenious and reflective inductions, I collect this solution of the

mysteries, by which the experience I gain from my senses confounds all the dogmas approved by my judgment. To the rational conjectures by which, when we first conversed on the marvels that perplexed me, you ascribed to my imagination, predisposed by mental excitement, physical fatigue or derangement, and a concurrence of singular events tending to strengthen such predisposition, the phantasmal impressions produced on my senses—to these conjectures you now add a new one, more startling and less admitted by sober physiologists. You conceive it possible that persons endowed with a rare and peculiar temperament can so operate on the imagination, and, through the imagination, on the senses of others, as to exceed even the powers ascribed to the practitioners of mesmerism and electro-biology, and give a certain foundation of truth to the old tales of magic and witchcraft. You imply that Margrave may be a person thus gifted, and hence the influence he unquestionably exercised over Lilian, and over, perhaps, less innocent agents, charmed or impelled by his will. And not discarding, as I own I should have been originally induced to do, the queries or suggestions adventured by Bacon in his discursive speculations on Nature, to wit, ‘that there be many things, some of them inanimate, that operate upon the spirits of men by secret sympathy and antipathy,’ and to which Bacon gave the quaint name of ‘imaginants ;’ so even that wand, of which I have described to you the magic-like effects, may have had properties communicated to it by which it performs the work of the

magician, as mesmerists pretend that some substance mesmerised by them can act on the patient as sensibly as if it were the mesmeriser himself. Do I state your suppositions correctly?"

"Yes ; always remembering that they are only suppositions, and volunteered with the utmost diffidence. But since, thus seated in the early wilderness, we permit ourselves the indulgence of childlike guess, may it not be possible, apart from the doubtful question whether a man can communicate to an inanimate material substance a power to act upon the mind or imagination of another man—may it not, I say, be possible that such a substance may contain in itself such a virtue or property potent over certain constitutions, though not over all? For instance, it is in my experience that the common hazel-wood will strongly affect some nervous temperaments, though wholly without effect on others. I remember a young girl who, having taken up a hazel-stick freshly cut, could not relax her hold of it ; and when it was wrenched away from her by force, was irresistibly attracted towards it, repossessed herself of it, and, after holding it a few minutes, was cast into a kind of trance in which she beheld phantasmal visions. Mentioning this curious case, which I supposed unique, to a learned brother of our profession, he told me that he had known other instances of the effect of the hazel upon nervous temperaments in persons of both sexes. Possibly it was some such peculiar property in the hazel that made it the wood selected for the old divining-rod. Again,

we know that the bay-tree, or laurel, was dedicated to the oracular Pythian Apollo. Now wherever, in the old world, we find that the learning of the priests enabled them to exhibit exceptional phenomena, which imposed upon popular credulity, there was a something or other which it is worth a philosopher's while to explore. And, accordingly, I always suspected that there was in the laurel some property favourable to ecstatic vision in highly impressionable temperaments. My suspicion, a few years ago, was justified by the experience of a German physician, who had under his care a cataleptic or ecstatic patient, and who assured me that he found nothing in this patient so stimulated the state of 'sleep-waking,' or so dispose that state to indulge in the hallucinations of prevision, as the berry of the laurel.* Well, we do not know what this wand that produced a seemingly magical effect upon you was really composed of. You did not notice the metal employed in the wire which you say communicated a thrill to the sensitive nerves in the palm of the hand. You cannot tell how far it might have been the vehicle of some fluid force in nature. Or still more probably, whether the pores of your hand insensibly imbibed, and communicated to the brain, some of those powerful narcotics, from which the Boudhists and the Arabs make unguents that induce visionary hallucinations, and in which substances undetected in the

* I may add that Dr Kerner instances the effect of laurel-berries on the Seeress of Prevorst, corresponding with that asserted by Julius Faber in the text.

hollow of the wand, or the handle of the wand itself, might be steeped.* One thing we do know, viz., that amongst the ancients, and especially in the East, the construction of wands for magical purposes was no commonplace mechanical craft, but a special and secret art appropriated to men who cultivated with assiduity all that was then known of natural science in order to extract from it agencies that might appear supernatural. Possibly, then, the rods or wands of the East, of which Scripture makes mention, were framed upon some principles of which we in our day are very naturally ignorant, since we do not ransack science for the same secrets. And thus, in the selection or preparation of the material employed, mainly consisted whatever may be referable to natural philosophical causes, in the antique science of Rhabdomaney, or divination and enchantment by wands. The staff or wand of which you tell me, was, you say, made of iron or steel and tipped with crystal. Possibly iron and crystal do really contain some properties not hitherto scientifically analysed, and only, indeed, potential over exceptional temperaments, which may account for the fact that iron and crystal have been favourites with all professed mystics, ancient and modern. The Delphic Pythoness had her iron tripod, Mesmer his iron bed ; and many persons, indisputably honest, cannot gaze long upon a ball of crystal but what they begin to see visions. I suspect that a philosoph-

* See for these unguents the work of M. Maury, before quoted, '*La Magie et l'Astrologie*,' &c., p. 417.

ical cause for such seemingly preternatural effects of crystal and iron will be found in connection with the extreme impressionability to changes in temperature which is the characteristic both of crystal and iron. But if these materials do contain certain powers over exceptional constitutions, we do not arrive at a supernatural, but at a natural phenomenon."

"Still," said I, "even granting that your explanatory hypotheses hit or approach the truth—still what a terrible power you would assign to man's will over men's reason and deeds!"

"Man's will," answered Faber, "has over men's deeds and reason, habitual and daily, power infinitely greater, and, when uncounterbalanced, infinitely more dangerous, than that which superstition exaggerates in magic. Man's will moves a war that decimates a race, and leaves behind it calamities little less dire than slaughter. Man's will frames, but it also corrupts laws; exalts, but also demoralises opinion; sets the world mad with fanaticism, as often as it curbs the heart's fierce instincts by the wisdom of brother-like mercy. You revolt at the exceptional, limited sway over some two or three individuals which the arts of a sorcerer (if sorcerer there be) can effect; and yet, at the very moment in which you were perplexed and appalled by such sway, or by your reluctant belief in it, your will was devising an engine to unsettle the reason and wither the hopes of millions!"

"My will! What engine?"

"A book conceived by your intellect, adorned by

your learning, and directed by your will, to steal from the minds of other men their persuasion of the soul's everlasting Hereafter."

I bowed my head, and felt myself grow pale.

"And if we accept Bacon's theory of 'secret sympathy,' or the plainer physiological maxim that there must be in the imagination, morbidly impressed by the will of another, some trains of idea in affinity with such influence and preinclined to receive it, no magician could warp you to evil, except through thoughts that themselves went astray. Grant that the Margrave who still haunts your mind did really, by some occult, sinister magnetism, guide the madman to murder—did influence the servant-woman's vulgar desire to pry into the secrets of her ill-fated master, or the old maid's covetous wish and envious malignity—what could this awful magician do more than any commonplace guilty adviser, to a mind predisposed to accept the advice?"

"You forget one example which destroys your argument—the spell which this mysterious fascinator could cast upon a creature so pure from all guilt as Lilian!"

"Will you forgive me if I answer frankly?"

"Speak."

"Your Lilian is spotless and pure as you deem her, and the fascination, therefore, attempts no lure through a sinful desire; it blends with its attraction no sentiment of affection untrue to yourself. Nay, it is justice to your Lilian, and may be a melancholy comfort to you, to state my conviction, based on the answers my

questions have drawn from her, that you were never more cherished by her love than when that love seemed to forsake you. Her imagination impressed her with the illusion that through your love for her you were threatened with a great peril. What seemed the levity of her desertion was the devotion of self-sacrifice. And, in her strange, dream-led wanderings, do not think that she was conscious of the fascination you impute to this mysterious Margrave: in her belief it was your own guardian angel that guided her steps, and her pilgrimage was ordained to disarm the foe that menaced you, and dissolve the spell that divided her life from yours! But had she not, long before this, wilfully prepared herself to be so deceived? Had not her fancies been deliberately encouraged to dwell remote from the duties we are placed on the earth to perform? The loftiest faculties in our nature are those that demand the finest poise, not to fall from their height and crush all the walls that they crown. With exquisite beauty of illustration, Hume says of the dreamers of 'bright fancies,' 'that they may be compared to those angels whom the Scriptures represent as covering their eyes with their wings.' Had you been, like my nephew, a wrestler for bread with the wilderness, what helpmate would your Lilian have been to you? How often would you have cried out in justifiable anger, 'I, son of Adam, am on earth, not in paradise! Oh, that my Eve were at home on my hearth, and not in the skies with the seraphs!' No Margrave, I venture to say, could have suspended

the healthful affections, or charmed into danger, the wide-awake soul of my Amy. When she rocks in its cradle the babe the young parents intrust to her heed—when she calls the kine to the milking, the chicks to their corn—when she but flits through my room to renew the flowers on the stand, or range in neat order the books that I read—no spell on her fancy could lead her a step from the range of her provident cares! At day she is contented to be on the commonplace earth; at evening she and I knock together at the one door of heaven, which opes to thanksgiving and prayer; and thanksgiving and prayer send us back, calm and hopeful, to the tasks that each morrow renews.”

I looked up as the old man paused, and, in the limpid clearness of the Australian atmosphere, I saw the child he thus praised standing by the garden-gate, looking towards us, and, though still distant, she seemed near. I felt wroth with her. My heart so cherished my harmless, defenceless Lilian, that I was jealous of the praise taken from her to be bestowed on another.

“Each of us,” said I, coldly, “has his or her own nature, and the uses harmonious to that nature’s idiosyncrasy. The world, I grant, would get on very ill if women were not, more or less, actively useful and quietly good, like your Amy. But the world would lose standards that exalt and refine, if no woman were permitted to gain, through the indulgence of fancy, thoughts exquisite as those which my Lilian conceived,

while thought, alas ! flowed out of fancy. I do not wound you by citing your Amy as a type of the mediocre. I do not claim for Lilian the rank we accord to the type of genius. But both are alike to such types in this—viz., that the uses of mediocrity are for everyday life, and the uses of genius, amidst a thousand mistakes which mediocrity never commits, are to suggest and perpetuate ideas which raise the standard of the mediocre to a nobler level. There would be fewer Amys in life if there were no Lilian ! as there would be far fewer good men of sense if there were no erring dreamer of genius.”

“You say well, Allen Fenwick. And who should be so indulgent to the vagaries of the imagination as the philosophers who taught your youth to doubt everything in the Maker’s plan of creation which could not be mathematically proved ? ‘The human mind,’ said Luther, ‘is like a drunkard on horseback ; prop it on one side, and it falls on the other.’ So the man who is much too enlightened to believe in a peasant’s religion, is always sure to set up some inane superstition of his own. Open biographical volumes wherever you please, and the man who has no faith in religion is a man who has faith in a nightmare. See that type of the elegant sceptics—Lord Herbert of Cherbury. He is writing a book against Revelation ; he asks a sign from heaven to tell him if his book is approved by his Maker, and the man who cannot believe in the miracles performed by his Saviour, gravely tells us of a miracle vouchsafed to himself. Take the hardest

and strongest intellect which the hardest and strongest race of mankind ever schooled and accomplished. See the greatest of great men,* the great Julius Cæsar! Publicly he asserts in the Senate that the immortality of the soul is a vain chimera. He professes the creed which Roman voluptuaries deduced from Epicurus, and denies all Divine interference in the affairs of the earth. A great authority for the Materialists—they have none greater! They can show on their side no intellect equal to Cæsar's! and yet this magnificent freethinker, rejecting a soul and a Deity, habitually entered his chariot in muttering a charm; crawled on his knees up the steps of a temple to propitiate the abstraction called 'Nemesis;' and did not cross the Rubicon till he had consulted the omens. What does all this prove?—a very simple truth. Man has some instincts with the brutes; for instance, hunger, and sexual love. Man has one instinct peculiar to himself, found universally (or with alleged exceptions in savage states so rare, that they do not affect the general law*)—an instinct of an invisible power with-

* It seems extremely doubtful whether the very few instances in which it has been asserted that a savage race has been found without recognition of a Deity and a future state would bear searching examination. It is set forth, for example, in most of the popular works on Australia, that the Australian savages have no notion of a Deity or a Hereafter, that they only worship a devil, or evil spirit. This assumption, though made more peremptorily, and by a greater number of writers, than any similar one regarding other savages, is altogether erroneous, and has no other foundation than the ignorance of the writers. The Australian savages recognise a Deity, but He is too august for a name in their own language; in English they call Him the Great Master—an expression synonymous with "The Great

out this earth, and of a life beyond the grave, which that power vouchsafes to his spirit. But the best of us cannot violate an instinct with impunity. Resist hunger as long as you can, and, rather than die of starvation, your instinct will make you a cannibal; resist love when youth and nature impel to it, and what pathologist does not track one broad path into madness or crime? So with the noblest instinct of all. Reject the internal conviction by which the grandest thinkers have sanctioned the hope of the humblest Christian, and you are servile at once to some faith inconceivably more hard to believe. The imagination will not be withheld from its yearnings for vistas beyond the walls of the flesh and the span of the present hour. Philosophy itself, in rejecting the healthful creeds by which man finds his safeguards in sober prayer, and his guide through the wilderness of visionary doubt, invents systems compared to which the mysteries of theology are simple. Suppose any man of strong, plain understanding had never heard of a Deity like Him whom we Christians adore, then ask this man which he can the better comprehend in his mind, and accept as a natural faith—viz., the simple Christianity of his shepherd, or the Pantheism of Spinoza? Place before an accomplished critic (who comes with a perfectly unprejudiced mind to either inquiry) first the arguments of David Hume against the Gospel miracles, and then the meta-

Lord." They believe in a hereafter of eternal joy, and place it amongst the stars.—See Strzelecki's 'Physical Description of New South Wales.'

physical crotchets of David Hume himself. This subtle philosopher, not content, with Berkeley, to get rid of matter—not content, with Condillac, to get rid of spirit or mind—proceeds to a miracle greater than any his Maker has yet vouchsafed to reveal. He, being then alive and in the act of writing, gets rid of himself altogether. Nay, he confesses he cannot reason with any one who is stupid enough to think he has a self. His words are : ‘What we call a mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions or objects united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with perfect simplicity and identity. If any one, upon serious and candid reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason with him no longer.’ Certainly I would rather believe all the ghost stories upon record than believe that I am not even a ghost, distinct and apart from the perceptions conveyed to me, no matter how—just as I am distinct and apart from the furniture in my room, no matter whether I found it there or whether I bought it. If some old cosmogonist asked you to believe that the primitive cause of the solar system was not to be traced to a Divine Intelligence, but to a nebulosity, originally so diffused that its existence can with difficulty be conceived, and that the origin of the present system of organised beings equally dispensed with the agency of a creative mind, and could be referred to molecules formed in the water by the power of attraction, till, by modifications of cellular tissue in the gradual lapse of ages, one monad

became an oyster and another a Man—would you not say this cosmogony could scarcely have misled the human understanding even in the earliest dawn of speculative inquiry? Yet such are the hypotheses to which the desire to philosophise away that simple proposition of a Divine First Cause, which every child can comprehend, led two of the greatest geniuses and profoundest reasoners of modern times—La Place and La Marck.* Certainly, the more you examine those arch phantasmagorists, the philosophers who would leave nothing in the universe but their own delusions, the more your intellectual pride may be humbled. The wildest phenomena which have startled you, are not more extravagant than the grave explanations which intellectual presumption adventures on the elements of our own organism and the relations between the world of matter and the world of ideas.”

Here our conversation stopped, for Amy had now joined us, and, looking up to reply, I saw the child's innocent face between me and the furrowed brow of the old man.

* See the observations on La Place and La Marck in the introduction to Kirby's 'Bridgewater Treatise.'

CHAPTER LXXII.

I TURNED back alone. The sun was reddening the summits of the distant mountain-range, but dark clouds, that portended rain, were gathering behind my way and deepening the shadows in many a chasm and hollow which volcanic fires had wrought on the surface of uplands undulating like diluvian billows fixed into stone in the midst of their stormy swell. I wandered on and away from the beaten track,^s absorbed in thought. Could I acknowledge in Julius Faber's conjectures any basis for logical ratiocination? or were they not the ingenious fancies of that empirical Philosophy of Sentiment by which the aged, in the decline of severer faculties, sometimes assimilate their theories to the hazy romance of youth? I can well conceive that the story I tell will be regarded by most as a wild and fantastic fable; that by some it may be considered a vehicle for guesses at various riddles of Nature, without or within us, which are free to the licence of romance, though forbidden to the caution of science. But, I—I—know unmistakably my own identity, my own positive place in a substantial universe. And beyond that knowledge what do I know? Yet

had Faber no ground for his startling parallels between the chimeras of superstition and the alternatives to faith volunteered by the metaphysical speculations of knowledge? On the theorems of Condillac, I, in common with numberless contemporaneous students (for, in my youth, Condillac held sway in the schools, as now, driven forth from the schools, his opinions float loose through the talk and the scribble of men of the world who perhaps never opened his page)—on the theorems of Condillac I had built up a system of thought designed to immure the swathed form of material philosophy from all rays and all sounds of a world not material, as the walls of some blind mausoleum shut out, from the mummy within, the whisper of winds, and the gleaming of stars.

And did not those very theorems, when carried out to their strict and completing results by the close reasonings of Hume, resolve my own living identity, the one conscious indivisible ME, into a bundle of memories derived from the senses which had bubbled and duped my experience, and reduce into a phantom, as spectral as that of the Luminous Shadow, the whole solid frame of creation?

While pondering these questions, the storm, whose forewarnings I had neglected to heed, burst forth with all the suddenness peculiar to the Australian climes. The rains descended like the rushing of floods. In the beds of watercourses, which at noon seemed dried up and exhausted, the torrents began to swell and to rave; the grey crags around them were

animated into living waterfalls. I looked round, and the landscape was as changed as a scene that replaces a scene on the player's stage. I was aware that I had wandered far from my home, and I knew not what direction I should take to regain it. Close at hand, and raised above the torrents that now rushed in many a gully and tributary creek around and before me, the mouth of a deep cave, overgrown with bushes and creeping flowers tossed wildly to and fro between the rain from above and the spray of cascades below, offered a shelter from the storm. I entered, scaring innumerable flocks of bats striking against me, blinded by the glare of the lightning that followed me into the cavern, and hastening to re-settle themselves on the pendants of stalactites, or the jagged buttresses of primeval wall.

From time to time the lightning darted into the gloom and lingered amongst its shadows ; and I saw, by the flash, that the floors on which I stood were strewn with strange bones, some amongst them the fossilised relics of races destroyed by the Deluge. The rain continued for more than two hours with unabated violence ; then it ceased almost as suddenly as it had come on. And the lustrous moon of Australia burst from the clouds, shining, bright as an English dawn, into the hollows of the cave. And then simultaneously arose all the choral songs of the wilderness—creatures whose voices are heard at night—the loud whirr of the locusts, the musical boom of the bull-frog, the cuckoo note of the morepork, and, mournful

amidst all those merrier sounds, the hoot of the owl, through the wizard she-oaks and the pale green of the gum-trees.

I stepped forth into the open air, and gazed, first instinctively on the heavens, next, with more heedful eye, upon the earth. The nature of the soil bore the evidence of volcanic fires long since extinguished. Just before my feet, the rays fell full upon a bright yellow streak in the block of quartz half imbedded in the soft moist soil. In the midst of all the solemn thoughts and the intense sorrows which weighed upon heart and mind, that yellow gleam startled the mind into a direction remote from philosophy, quickened the heart to a beat that chimed with no household affections. Involuntarily I stooped; impulsively I struck the block with the hatchet, or tomahawk, I carried habitually about me, for the purpose of marking the trees that I wished to clear from the waste of my broad domain. The quartz was shattered by the stroke, and left disburied its glittering treasure. My first glance had not deceived me. I, vain seeker after knowledge, had at least discovered gold. I took up the bright metal—gold! I paused; I looked round; the land that just before had seemed to me so worthless, took the value of Ophir. Its features had before been as unknown to me as the Mountains of the Moon, and now my memory became wonderfully quickened. I recalled the rough map of my possessions, the first careless ride round their boundaries. Yes, the land on which I stood—for miles, to the spur of those

farther mountains—the land was mine, and, beneath its surface, there was gold! I closed my eyes; for some moments visions of boundless wealth, and of the royal power which such wealth could command, swept athwart my brain. But my heart rapidly settled back to its real treasure. “What matters,” I sighed, “all this dross? Could Ophir itself buy back to my Lilian’s smile one ray of the light which gave ‘glory to the grass and splendour to the flower?’”

So muttering, I flung the gold into the torrent that raged below, and went on through the moonlight, sorrowing silently—only thankful for the discovery that had quickened my reminiscence of the landmarks by which to steer my way through the wilderness.

The night was half gone, for even when I had gained the familiar track through the pastures, the swell of the many winding creeks that now intersected the way obliged me often to retrace my steps; to find, sometimes, the bridge of a felled tree which had been providently left unremoved over the now foaming torrent, and, more than once, to swim across the current, in which swimmers less strong or less practised would have been dashed down the falls, where loose logs and torn trees went clattering and whirled: for I was in danger of life. A band of the savage natives were stealthily creeping on my track—the natives in those parts were not then so much awed by the white man as now. A boomerang* had whirred by me, burying itself amongst the herbage close before my feet.

* A missile weapon peculiar to the Australian savages.

I had turned, sought to find and to face these dastardly foes ; they contrived to elude me. But when I moved on, my ear, sharpened by danger, heard them moving too in my rear. Once only three hideous forms suddenly faced me, springing up from a thicket, all tangled with honeysuckles and creepers of blue and vermilion. I walked steadily up to them ; they halted a moment or so in suspense, but perhaps they were scared by my stature or awed by my aspect ; and the Unfamiliar, though Human, had terror for them, as the Unfamiliar, although but a Shadow, had had terror for me. They vanished, and as quickly as if they had crept into the earth.

At length the air brought me the soft perfume of my well-known acacias, and my house stood before me, amidst English flowers and English fruit-trees, under the effulgent Australian moon. Just as I was opening the little gate which gave access from the pasture-land into the garden, a figure in white rose up from under light feathery boughs, and a hand was laid on my arm. I started ; but my surprise was changed into fear when I saw the pale face and sweet eyes of Lilian.

“Heavens ! you here ! you—at this hour ! Lilian, what is this ?”

“Hush !” she whispered, clinging to me ; “hush ! do not tell : no one knows. I missed you when the storm came on ; I have missed you ever since. Others went in search of you and came back. I could not sleep, but the rest are sleeping, so I stole down to

watch for you. Brother, brother, if any harm chanced to you, even the angels could not comfort me; all would be dark, dark! But you are safe, safe, safe!" And she clung to me yet closer.

"Ah! Lilian, Lilian, your vision in the hour I first beheld you was indeed prophetic—'Each has need of the other.' Do you remember?"

"Softly, softly," she said, "let me think!" She stood quietly by my side, looking up into the sky, with all its numberless stars, and its solitary moon now sinking slow behind the verge of the forest. "It comes back to me," she murmured softly—"the Long ago—the sweet Long ago!"

I held my breath to listen.

"There—there!" she resumed, pointing to the heavens; "do you see? You are there, and my father, and—and—Oh! that terrible face—those serpent eyes—the dead man's skull! Save me—save me!"

She bowed her head upon my bosom, and I led her gently back towards the house. As we gained the door which she had left open, the starlight shining across the shadowy gloom within, she lifted her face from my breast, and cast a hurried fearful look round the shining garden, then into the dim recess beyond the threshold.

"It is there—there!—the Shadow that lured me on, whispering that if I followed it I should join my beloved. False dreadful Shadow! it will fade soon—fade into the grinning horrible skull. Brother,

brother, where is my Allen? Is he dead—dead—or is it I who am dead to him?"

I could but clasp her again to my breast, and seek to mantle her shivering form with my dripping garments, all the while my eyes—following the direction which hers had taken—dwelt on the walls of the nook within the threshold, half lost in darkness, half white in starlight. And there I, too, beheld the haunting Luminous Shadow, the spectral effigies of the mysterious being, whose very existence in the flesh was a riddle unsolved by my reason. Distinctly I saw the Shadow, but its light was far paler, its outline far more vague, than when I had beheld it before. I took courage, as I felt Lilian's heart beating against my own. I advanced, I crossed the threshold—the Shadow was gone.

"There is no shadow here—no phantom to daunt thee, my life's life," said I, bending over Lilian.

"It has touched me in passing; I feel it—cold, cold, cold!" she answered, faintly.

I bore her to her room, placed her on her bed, struck a light, watched over her. At dawn there was a change in her face, and from that time health gradually left her; strength slowly, slowly, yet to me perceptibly, ebbed from her life away.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

MONTHS upon months have rolled on since the night in which Lilian had watched for my coming amidst the chilling airs under the haunting moon. I have said that from the date of that night her health began gradually to fail, but in her mind there was evidently at work some slow revolution. Her visionary abstractions were less frequent ; when they occurred, less prolonged. There was no longer in her soft face that celestial serenity which spoke her content in her dreams, but often a look of anxiety and trouble. She was even more silent than before ; but when she did speak, there were now evident some struggling gleams of memory. She startled us at times by a distinct allusion to the events and scenes of her early childhood. More than once she spoke of commonplace incidents and mere acquaintances at L——. At last she seemed to recognise Mrs Ashleigh as her mother ; but me, as Allen Fenwick, her betrothed, her bridegroom, no ! Once or twice she spoke to me of her beloved as of a stranger to myself, and asked me not to deceive her—should she ever see him again ? There was one change in this new phase of her state that wounded

me to the quick. She had always previously seemed to welcome my presence ; now there were hours, sometimes days together, in which my presence was evidently painful to her. She would become agitated when I stole into her room—make signs to me to leave her—grow yet more disturbed if I did not immediately obey, and become calm again when I was gone.

Faber sought constantly to sustain my courage and administer to my hopes by reminding me of the prediction he had hazarded—viz., that through some malady to the frame the reason would be ultimately restored.

He said, “Observe ! her mind was first roused from its slumber by the affectionate, unconquered impulse of her heart. You were absent—the storm alarmed her—she missed you—feared for you. The love within her, not alienated, though latent, drew her thoughts into definite human tracks. And thus, the words that you tell me she uttered when you appeared before her were words of love, stricken, though as yet irregularly, as the winds strike the harp-strings, from chords of awakened memory. The same unwonted excitement, together with lengthened exposure to the cold night-air, will account for the shock to her physical system, and the languor and waste of strength by which it has been succeeded.”

“Ay, and the Shadow that we *both* saw within the threshold. What of that ?”

“Are there no records on evidence, which most physicians of very extended practice will perhaps allow

that their experience more or less tends to confirm—no records of the singular coincidences between individual impressions which are produced by sympathy? Now, whether you or your Lilian were first haunted by this Shadow I know not. Perhaps before it appeared to you in the wizard's chamber, it had appeared to her by the Monk's Well. Perhaps, as it came to you in the prison, so it lured her through the solitudes, associating its illusory guidance with dreams of you. And again, when she saw it within your threshold, your phantasy, so abruptly invoked, made you see with the eyes of your Lilian! Does this doctrine of sympathy, though by that very mystery you two loved each other at first—though, without it, love at first sight were in itself an incredible miracle—does, I say, this doctrine of sympathy seem to you inadmissible? Then nothing is left for us but to revolve the conjecture I before threw out. Have certain organisations like that of Margrave the power to impress, through space, the imaginations of those over whom they have forced a control? I know not. But if they have, it is not supernatural; it is but one of those operations in Nature so rare and exceptional, and of which testimony and evidence are so imperfect and so liable to superstitious illusions, that they have not yet been traced—as, if truthful, no doubt they can be, by the patient genius of science—to one of those secondary causes by which the Creator ordains that Nature shall act on Man."

By degrees I became dissatisfied with my conversations with Faber. I yearned for explanations; all

guesses but bewildered me more. In his family, with one exception, I found no congenial association. His nephew seemed to me an ordinary specimen of a very trite human nature—a young man of limited ideas, fair moral tendencies, going mechanically right where not tempted to wrong. The same desire of gain which had urged him to gamble and speculate when thrown in societies rife with such example, led him, now in the Bush, to healthful, industrious, persevering labour. *Spes foret agricolas*, says the poet; the same Hope which entices the fish to the hook, impels the plough of the husbandman. The young farmer's young wife was somewhat superior to him; she had more refinement of taste, more culture of mind, but, living in his life, she was inevitably levelled to his ends and pursuits. And, next to the babe in the cradle, no object seemed to her so important as that of guarding the sheep from the scab and the dingoes. I was amazed to see how quietly a man whose mind was so stored by life and by books as that of Julius Faber—a man who had loved the clash of conflicting intellects, and acquired the rewards of fame—could accommodate himself to the cabined range of his kinsfolks' half-civilised existence, take interest in their trivial talk, find varying excitement in the monotonous household of a peasant-like farmer. I could not help saying as much to him once. "My friend," replied the old man, "believe me that the happiest art of intellect, however lofty, is that which enables it to be cheerfully at home with the Real!"

The only one of the family in which Faber was domesticated in whom I found an interest, to whose talk I could listen without fatigue, was the child Amy. Simple though she was in language, patient of labour as the most laborious, I recognised in her a quiet nobleness of sentiment, which exalted above the commonplace the acts of her commonplace life. She had no precocious intellect, no enthusiastic fancies, but she had an exquisite activity of heart. It was her heart that animated her sense of duty, and made duty a sweetness and a joy. She felt to the core the kindness of those around her; exaggerated, with the warmth of her gratitude, the claims which that kindness imposed. Even for the blessing of life, which she shared with all creation, she felt as if singled out by the undeserved favour of the Creator, and thus was filled with religion because she was filled with love.

My interest in this child was increased and deepened by my saddened and not wholly unremorseful remembrance of the night on which her sobs had pierced my ear—the night from which I secretly dated the mysterious agencies that had wrenched from their proper field and career both my mind and my life. But a gentler interest endeared her to my thoughts in the pleasure that Lilian felt in her visits, in the affectionate intercourse that sprang up between the afflicted sufferer and the harmless infant. Often when we failed to comprehend some meaning which Lilian evidently wished to convey to us—*we*, her mother and her husband—she was understood with as much ease by Amy,

the unlettered child, as by Faber the grey-haired thinker.

“How is it—how is it?” I asked, impatiently and jealously, of Faber. “Love is said to interpret where wisdom fails, and you yourself talk of the marvels which sympathy may effect between lover and beloved; yet when, for days together, I cannot succeed in unravelling Lilian’s wish or her thought—and her own mother is equally in fault—you or Amy, closeted alone with her for five minutes, comprehend and are comprehended.”

“Allen,” answered Faber, “Amy and I believe in spirit, and she, in whom mind is dormant but spirit awake, feels in such belief a sympathy which she has not, in that respect, with yourself, nor even with her mother. You seek only through your mind to conjecture hers. Her mother has sense clear enough where habitual experience can guide it, but that sense is confused, and forsakes her, when forced from the regular pathway in which it has been accustomed to tread. Amy and I through soul guess at soul, and though mostly contented with earth, we can both rise at times into heaven. We pray.”

“Alas!” said I, half mournfully, half angrily: “when you thus speak of Mind as distinct from Soul, it was only in that Vision which you bid me regard as the illusion of a fancy stimulated by chemical vapours, producing on the brain an effect similar to that of opium or the inhalation of the oxide gas, that I have ever seen the silver spark of the Soul, distinct from

the light of the Mind. And holding, as I do, that all intellectual ideas are derived from the experiences of the body, whether I accept the theory of Locke, or that of Condillac, or that into which their propositions reach their final development in the wonderful subtlety of Hume, I cannot detect the immaterial spirit in the material substance—much less follow its escape from the organic matter in which the principle of thought ceases with the principle of life. When the metaphysician, contending for the immortality of the thinking faculty, analyses Mind, his analysis comprehends the mind of the brute, nay, of the insect, as well as that of man. Take Reid's definition of Mind, as the most comprehensive which I can at the moment remember : 'By the mind of a man we understand that in him which thinks, remembers, reasons, and wills.' But this definition only distinguishes the mind of man from that of the brute by superiority in the same attributes, and not by attributes denied to the brute. An animal, even an insect, thinks, remembers, reasons, and wills.*

* "Are intelligence and instinct, thus differing in their relative proportion in man as compared with all other animals, yet the same in kind and manner of operation in both? To this question we must give at once an affirmative answer. The expression of Cuvier, regarding the faculty of reasoning in lower animals, '*Leur intelligence exécute des opérations du même genre,*' is true in its full sense. We can in no manner define reason so as to exclude acts which are at every moment present to our observation, and which we find in many instances to contravene the natural instincts of the species. The demeanour and acts of the dog in reference to his master, or the various uses to which he is put by man, are as strictly logical as those we witness in the ordinary transactions of life." (Sir Henry Holland, '*Chapters on Mental Physiology,*' p. 220.) The

Few naturalists will now support the doctrine that all the mental operations of brute or insect are to be exclusively referred to instincts ; and even if they do, the word instinct is a very vague word—loose and large enough to cover an abyss which our knowledge has not sounded. And, indeed, in proportion as an animal, like the dog, becomes cultivated by intercourse, his instincts grow weaker, and his ideas, formed by experience (*viz.*, his mind), more developed, often to the conquest of the instincts themselves. Hence, with his usual candour, Dr Abercrombie—in contending ‘that everything mental ceases to exist after death, when we know that everything corporeal continues to exist, is a gratuitous assumption contrary to every rule of philosophical inquiry,’—feels compelled, by his reasoning, to admit the probability of a future life even to the lower animals. His words are : ‘To this mode of reasoning it has been objected that it would go to establish an immaterial principle in the lower animals, which in them exhibits many of the phenomena of mind. I have only to answer, Be it so. There are in the lower animals many of the phenomena of mind, and with regard to these we also contend that they are entirely distinct from anything we know of the properties of matter, which is all that we mean, or can mean, by

whole of the chapter on Instincts and Habits in this work should be read in connection with the passage just quoted. The work itself, at once cautious and suggestive, is not one of the least obligations which philosophy and religion alike owe to the lucubrations of English medical men.

being immaterial.'* Am I then driven to admit that if man's mind is immaterial and imperishable, so also is that of the ape and the ant?"

"I own," said Faber, with his peculiar smile, arch and genial, "that if I were compelled to make that admission, it would not shock my pride. I do not presume to set any limit to the goodness of the Creator: and should be as humbly pleased as the Indian, if in

‘yonder sky,

My faithful dog should bear me company.’

You are too familiar with the works of that Titan in wisdom and error, Descartes, not to recollect the interesting correspondence between the urbane philosopher and our combative countryman, Henry More,† on this very subject; in which certainly More has the best of it when Descartes insists on reducing what he calls the soul (*l'âme*) of brutes into the same kind of machines as man constructs from inorganised matter. The learning, indeed, lavished on the insoluble question involved in the psychology of the inferior animals, is a proof at least of the all-inquisitive, redundant spirit of man.‡ We have almost a literature in itself devoted to endeavours to interpret the language of brutes.§ Dupont

* Abererombie's 'Intellectual Powers,' p. 26. Fifteenth Edition.

† 'Œuvres de Descartes,' vol. x. p. 178 et seq. (Cousin's Edition.)

‡ M. Tissot, the distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Dijon, in his recent work, 'La Vie dans l'Homme,' p. 255, gives a long and illustrious list of philosophers who assign a rational soul (*âme*) to the inferior animals, though he truly adds, "that they have not always the courage of their opinion."

§ Some idea of the extent of research and imagination bestowed

de Nemours has discovered that dogs talk in vowels, using only two consonants, G, Z, when they are angry. He asserts that cats employ the same vowels as dogs ; but their language is more affluent in consonants, including M, N, B, R, V, F. How many laborious efforts have been made to define and construe the song of the nightingale ! One version of that song by Bechstein, the naturalist, published in 1840, I remember to have seen. And I heard a lady, gifted with a singularly charming voice, chant the mysterious vowels with so exquisite a pathos, that one could not refuse to believe her when she declared that she fully comprehended the bird's meaning, and gave to the nightingale's warble the tender interpretation of her own woman's heart.

“But leaving all such discussions to their proper place amongst the Curiosities of Literature, I come in earnest to the question you have so earnestly raised ; and to me the distinction between man and the lower animals in reference to a spiritual nature designed for a future existence, and the mental operations whose uses are bounded to an existence on earth, seems ineffaceably clear. Whether ideas or even perceptions be innate or all formed by experience is a speculation for metaphysicians, which, so far as it affects the question of an immaterial principle, I am quite willing to lay aside. I can well understand that a materialist may admit innate ideas in Man, as he must admit them in the

on this subject may be gleaned from the sprightly work of Pierquin de Gemblouz, ‘*Idiomologie des Animaux*,’ published at Paris, 1844.

instinct of brutes, tracing them to hereditary predispositions. On the other hand, we know that the most devout believers in our spiritual nature have insisted, with Locke, in denying any idea, even of the Deity, to be innate.

“But here comes my argument. I care not how ideas are formed—the material point is, how are the *capacities to receive ideas formed?* The ideas may all come from experience, but the capacity to receive the ideas must be inherent. I take the word capacity as a good plain English word, rather than the more technical word ‘receptivity,’ employed by Kant. And by capacity I mean the passive power* to receive ideas, whether in man or in any living thing by which ideas are received. A man and an elephant is each formed with capacities to receive ideas suited to the several places in the universe held by each.

“The more I look through nature the more I find that on all varieties of organised life is carefully bestowed the *capacity* to receive the impressions, be they called perceptions or ideas, which are adapted to the uses each creature is intended to derive from them. I find, then, that Man alone is endowed with the capacity to receive the ideas of a God, of Soul, of Worship, of a Hereafter. I see no trace of such a capacity in the inferior races; nor, however their intelligence may be refined by culture, is such a capacity ever apparent in them.

“But wherever capacities to receive impressions are

* “Faculty is active power; capacity is passive power.”—Sir W. Hamilton, ‘Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic,’ vol. i. p. 173.

sufficiently general in any given species of creature to be called universal to that species, and yet not given to another species, then, from all analogy throughout Nature, those capacities are surely designed by Providence for the distinct use and conservation of the species to which they are given.

“It is no answer to me to say that the inherent capacities thus bestowed on Man do not suffice in themselves to make him form right notions of a Deity or a Hereafter; because it is plainly the design of Providence that Man must learn to correct and improve all his notions by his own study and observation. He must build a hut before he can build a Parthenon; he must believe with the savage or the heathen before he can believe with the philosopher or Christian. In a word, in all his capacities, Man has only given to him, not the immediate knowledge of the Perfect, but the means to strive towards the Perfect. And thus one of the most accomplished of modern reasoners, to whose lectures you must have listened with delight in your college days, says well: ‘Accordingly, the sciences always studied with keenest interest are those in a state of progress and uncertainty; absolute certainty and absolute completion would be the paralysis of any study, and the last worst calamity that could befall Man, as he is at present constituted, would be that full and final possession of speculative truth which he now vainly anticipates as the consummation of his intellectual happiness.’ *

* Sir W. Hamilton’s ‘Lectures,’ vol. i. p. 10.

“ Well, then, in all those capacities for the reception of impressions from external Nature which are given to Man and not to the brutes, I see the evidence of Man’s soul. I can understand why the inferior animal has no capacity to receive the idea of a Deity and of Worship—simply because the inferior animal, even if graciously admitted to a future life, may not therein preserve the sense of its identity. I can understand even why that sympathy with each other which we men possess, and which constitutes the great virtue we emphatically call Humanity, is not possessed by the lesser animals (or, at least, in a very rare and exceptional degree) even where they live in communities, like beavers, or bees, or ants ; because men are destined to meet, to know, and to love each other in the life to come, and the bond between the brutes ceases here.

“ Now the more, then, we examine the inherent capacities bestowed distinctly and solely on Man, the more they seem to distinguish him from the other races by their comprehension of objects beyond his life upon this earth. ‘ Man alone,’ says Müller, ‘ can conceive abstract notions :’ and it is in abstract notions—such as time, space, matter, spirit, light, form, quantity, essence—that man grounds not only all philosophy, all science, but all that practically improves one generation for the benefit of the next. And why ? Because all these abstract notions unconsciously lead the mind away from the material into the immaterial—from the present into the future. But if man ceases to exist when he disappears in the grave, you must be compelled to

affirm that he is the only creature in existence whom Nature or Providence has condescended to deceive and cheat by capacities for which there are no available objects. How nobly and how truly has Chalmers said: ‘What inference shall we draw from this remarkable law in Nature that there is nothing waste and nothing meaningless in the feelings and faculties wherewith living creatures are endowed? For each desire there is a counterpart object; for each faculty there is room and opportunity for exercise, either in the present or the coming futurity. Now, but for the doctrine of immortality, Man would be an exception to this law—he would stand forth as an anomaly in Nature, with aspirations in his heart for which the universe had no antitype to offer, with capacities of understanding and thought that never were to be followed by objects of corresponding greatness through the whole history of his being!

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“ ‘With the inferior animals there is a certain squareness of adjustment, if we may so term it, between each desire and its correspondent gratification. The one is evenly met by the other, and there is a fulness and definiteness of enjoyment up to the capacity of enjoyment. Not so with Man, who, both from the vastness of his propensities and the vastness of his powers, feels himself chained and beset in a field too narrow for him. He alone labours under the discomfort of an incongruity between his circumstances and his powers; and unless there be new circumstances awaiting him in a more

advanced state of being, he, the noblest of Nature's products here, would turn out to be the greatest of her failures.'*

"This, then, I take to be the proof of Soul in Man, not that he has a mind—because, as you justly say, inferior animals have that, though in a lesser degree—but because he has the capacities to comprehend, as soon as he is capable of any abstract ideas whatsoever, the very truths not needed for self-conservation on earth, and therefore not given to yonder ox and opossum—viz., the nature of Deity—Soul—Hereafter. And in the recognition of these truths, the Human society, that excels the society of beavers, bees, and ants by perpetual and progressive improvement on the notions inherited from its progenitors, rests its basis. Thus, in fact, this world is benefited for men by their belief in the next, while the society of brutes remains age after age the same. Neither the bee nor the beaver has, in all probability, improved since the Deluge.

"But inseparable from the conviction of these truths is the impulse of prayer and worship. It does not touch my argument when a philosopher of the school of Bolingbroke or Lucretius says, 'that the origin of prayer is in Man's ignorance of the phenomena of Nature'—that it is fear or ignorance which,

* Chalmers, 'Bridgewater Treatise,' vol. ii. pp. 28, 30. Perhaps I should observe, that here and elsewhere in the dialogues between Faber and Fenwick, it has generally been thought better to substitute the words of the author quoted for the mere outline or purport of the quotation which memory afforded to the interlocutor.

‘when rocked the mountains or when groaned the ground, taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray.’ My answer is—the brutes are much more forcibly impressed by natural phenomena than Man is ; the bird and the beast know before you and I do when the mountain will rock and the ground groan, and their instinct leads them to shelter ; but it does not lead them to prayer. If my theory be right that Soul is to be sought not in the question whether mental ideas be innate or formed by experience, by the senses, by association or habit, but in the *inherent capacity* to receive ideas,—then the capacity bestowed on Man alone, to be impressed by Nature herself with the idea of a Power superior to Nature, with which Power he can establish commune, is a proof that to Man alone the Maker has made Nature itself proclaim his existence—that to Man alone the Deity vouchsafes the communion with Himself which comes from prayer.”

“Even were this so,” said I, “is not the Creator omniscient? if all-wise, all-foreseeing? if all-foreseeing, all pre-ordaining? Can the prayer of His creature alter the ways of His will?”

“For the answer to a question,” returned Faber, “which is not unfrequently asked by the clever men of the world, I ought to refer you to the skilled theologians who have so triumphantly carried the reasoner over that ford of doubt which is crossed every day by the infant. But as we have not their books in the wilderness, I am contented to draw my reply as a necessary and logical sequence from the propositions I

have sought to ground on the plain observation of Nature. I can only guess at the Deity's Omniscience, or His modes of enforcing His power, by the observation of His general laws ; and of all His laws, I know of none more general than the impulse which bids men pray—which makes Nature so act, that all the phenomena of Nature we can conceive, however startling and inexperienced, do not make the brute pray ; but there is not a trouble that can happen to man but what his impulse is to pray—always provided, indeed, that he is not a philosopher. I say not this in scorn of the philosopher, to whose wildest guess our obligations are infinite, but simply because for all which is impulsive to Man, there is a reason in Nature which no philosophy can explain away. I do not, then, bewilder myself by seeking to bind and limit the Omniscience of the Deity to my finite ideas. I content myself with supposing that, somehow or other, He has made it quite compatible with His Omniscience that Man should obey the impulse which leads him to believe that, in addressing a Deity, he is addressing a tender, compassionate, benignant Father, and in that obedience shall obtain beneficial results. If that impulse be an illusion, then we must say that Heaven governs the earth by a lie ; and that is impossible, because, reasoning by analogy, all Nature is truthful—that is, Nature gives to no species instincts or impulses which are not of service to it. Should I not be a shallow physician if, where I find in the human organisation a principle or a property so general that I must

believe it normal to the healthful conditions of that organisation, I should refuse to admit that Nature intended it for use? Reasoning by all analogy, must I not say the habitual neglect of its use must more or less injure the harmonious wellbeing of the whole human system? I could have much to add upon the point in dispute, by which the creed implied in your question would enthrall the Divine mercy by the necessities of its Divine wisdom, and substitute for a benignant Deity a relentless Fate. But here I should exceed my province. I am no theologian. Enough for me that in all my afflictions, all my perplexities, an impulse, that I obey as an instinct, moves me at once to prayer. Do I find by experience that the prayer is heard, that the affliction is removed, the doubt is solved? That, indeed, would be presumptuous to say. But it is not presumptuous to think that, by the efficacy of prayer, my heart becomes more fortified against the sorrow, and my reason more serene amidst the doubt."

I listened, and ceased to argue. I felt as if in that solitude, and in the pause of my wonted mental occupations, my intellect was growing languid, and its old weapons rusting in disuse. My pride took alarm. I had so from my boyhood cherished the idea of fame, and so glorified the search after knowledge, that I recoiled in dismay from the thought that I had relinquished knowledge, and cut myself off from fame. I resolved to resume my once favourite philosophical pursuits, re-examine and complete the Work to which

I had once committed my hopes of renown; and, simultaneously, a restless desire seized me to communicate, though but at brief intervals, with other minds than those immediately within my reach—minds fresh from the old world, and reviving the memories of its vivid civilisation. Emigrants frequently passed my doors, but I had hitherto shrunk from tendering the hospitalities so universally accorded in the colony. I could not endure to expose to such rough strangers my Lilian's mournful affliction, and that thought was not less intolerable to Mrs Ashleigh. I now hastily constructed a log-building a few hundred yards from the house, and near the main track taken by travellers through the spacious pastures. I transported to this building my books and scientific instruments. In an upper storey I placed my telescopes and lenses, my crucibles and retorts. I renewed my chemical experiments—I sought to invigorate my mind by other branches of science which I had hitherto less cultured—meditated new theories on Light and Colour—collected specimens in Natural History—subjected animalcules to my microscope—geological fossils to my hammer. With all these quickened occupations of thought, I strove to distract myself from sorrow, and strengthen my reason against the illusions of my fantasy. The Luminous Shadow was not seen again on my wall, and the thought of Margrave himself was banished.

In this building I passed many hours of each day; more and more earnestly plunging my thoughts into

the depths of abstract study, as Lilian's unaccountable dislike to my presence became more and more decided. When I thus ceased to think that my life cheered and comforted hers, my heart's occupation was gone. I had annexed to the apartment reserved for myself in this log-hut a couple of spare rooms, in which I could accommodate passing strangers. I learned to look forward to their coming with interest, and to see them depart with regret ; yet, for the most part, they were of the ordinary class of colonial adventurers : bankrupt tradesmen, unlucky farmers, forlorn mechanics, hordes of unskilled labourers, now and then a briefless barrister, or a sporting collegian who had lost his all on the Derby. One day, however, a young man of education and manners that unmistakably proclaimed the cultured gentleman of Europe, stopped at my door. He was a cadet of a noble Prussian family, which for some political reasons had settled itself in Paris ; there he had become intimate with young French nobles, and, living the life of a young French noble, had soon scandalised his German parents, forestalled his slender inheritance, and been compelled to fly his father's frown and his tailor's bills. All this he told me with a lively frankness which proved how much the wit of a German can be quickened in the atmosphere of Paris. An old college friend, of birth inferior to his own, had been as unfortunate in seeking to make money as this young prodigal had been an adept in spending it. The friend, a few years previously, had accompanied other Germans in a migration to Aus-

tralia, and was already thriving ; the spendthrift noble was on his way to join the bankrupt trader, at a German settlement fifty miles distant from my house. This young man was unlike any German I ever met. He had all the exquisite levity by which the well-bred Frenchman gives to the doctrines of the Cynic the grace of the Epicurean. He owned himself to be good for nothing with an elegance of candour which not only disarmed censure, but seemed to challenge admiration ; and, withal, the happy spendthrift was so inebriate with hope—sure that he should be rich before he was thirty. How and wherefore rich ?—he could have no more explained than I can square the circle. When the grand serious German nature does Frenchify itself, it can become so extravagantly French !

I listened, almost enviously, to this light-hearted profligate's babble, as we sat by my rude fireside—I, sombre man of science and sorrow ; he, smiling child of idlesse and pleasure, so much one of Nature's courtier-like nobles, that there, as he smoked his villanous pipe, in his dust-soiled shabby garments, and with his ruffianly revolver stuck into his belt, I would defy the daintiest Aristarch who ever presided as critic over the holiday world, not to have said, "There smiles the genius beyond my laws, the born darling of the Graces, who in every circumstance, in every age, like Aristippus, would have socially charmed—would have been welcome to the orgies of a Cæsar or a Clodius, to the boudoirs of a Montespan or a Pompadour—have

loured through the Mulberry Gardens with a Rochester and a Buckingham, or smiled from the death-cart, with a Richelieu and a Lauzun, a gentleman's disdain of a mob !”

I was so thinking as we sat, his light talk frothing up from his careless lips, when suddenly from the spray and the sparkle of that light talk was flung forth the name of Margrave.

“Margrave !” I exclaimed. “Pardon me. What of him ?”

“What of him ! I asked if, by chance, you knew the only Englishman I ever had the meanness to envy !”

“Perhaps you speak of one person, and I thought of another.”

“*Pardieu*, my dear host, there can scarcely be two Margraves ! The one of whom I speak flashed like a meteor upon Paris, bought from a prince of the Bourse a palace that might have lodged a prince of the blood-royal, eclipsed our Jew bankers in splendour, our *jeunesse dorée* in good looks and hairbrain adventures, and, strangest of all, filled his *salons* with philosophers and charlatans, chemists and spirit-rappers ; insulting the gravest dons of the schools by bringing them face to face with the most impudent quacks, the most ridiculous dreamers—and yet, withal, himself so racy and charming, so *bon prince*, so *bon enfant* ! For six months he was the rage at Paris : perhaps he might have continued to be the rage there for six years, but all at once the meteor vanished as suddenly as it had flashed. Is this the Margrave whom you know ?”

“I should not have thought the Margrave whom I knew could have reconciled his tastes to the life of cities.”

“Nor could this man : cities were too tame for him. He has gone to some far-remote wilds in the East—some say in search of the Philosopher’s Stone ; for he actually maintained in his house a Sicilian adventurer, who, when at work on that famous discovery, was stifled by the fumes of his own crucible. After that misfortune, Margrave took Paris in disgust, and we lost him.”

“So this is the only Englishman whom you envy ! Envy him ! Why ?”

“Because he is the only Englishman I ever met who contrived to be rich and yet free from the spleen ; I envied him because one had only to look at his face and see how thoroughly he enjoyed the life of which your countrymen seem to be so heartily tired ! But now that I have satisfied your curiosity, pray satisfy mine. Who and what is this Englishman ?”

“Who and what was he supposed at Paris to be ?”

“Conjectures were numberless. One of your countrymen suggested that which was most generally favoured. This gentleman, whose name I forget, but who was one of those old *roués* who fancy themselves young because they live with the young, no sooner set eyes upon Margrave than he exclaimed, ‘Louis Grayle come to life again, as I saw him forty-four years ago ! But no—still younger, still handsomer—it must be his son !’ ”

“Louis Grayle, who was said to be murdered at Aleppo?”

“The same. That strange old man was enormously rich, but it seems that he hated his lawful heirs, and left behind him a fortune so far below that which he was known to possess, that he must certainly have disposed of it secretly before his death. Why so dispose of it, if not to enrich some natural son, whom, for private reasons, he might not have wished to acknowledge, or point out to the world by the signal bequest of his will? All that Margrave ever said of himself and the source of his wealth confirmed this belief. He frankly proclaimed himself a natural son, enriched by a father whose name he knew not nor cared to know.”

“It is true. And Margrave quitted Paris for the East? When?”

“I can tell you the date within a day or two, for his flight preceded mine by a week; and, happily, all Paris was so busy in talking of it, that I slipped away without notice.”

And the Prussian then named a date which it thrilled me to hear, for it was in that very month, and about that very day, that the Luminous Shadow had stood within my threshold.

The young Count now struck off into other subjects of talk: nothing more was said of Margrave. An hour or two afterwards he went on his way, and I remained long gazing musingly on the embers of the fire dying low on my hearth.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

My Work, my Philosophical Work—the ambitious hope of my intellectual life—how eagerly I returned to it again! Far away from my household grief, far away from my haggard perplexities—neither a Lilian nor a Margrave there!

As I went over what I had before written, each link in its chain of reasoning seemed so serried, that to alter one were to derange all: and the whole reasoning was so opposed to the possibility of the wonders I myself had experienced, so hostile to the subtle hypotheses of a Faber, or the childlike belief of an Amy, that I must have destroyed the entire work if I had admitted such contradictions to its design!

But the Work was I myself!—I, in my solid, sober, healthful mind, before the brain had been perplexed by a phantom. Were phantoms to be allowed as testimonies against science? No; in returning to my Book, I returned to my former Me!

How strange is that contradiction between our being as man and our being as author! Take any writer enamoured of a system—a thousand things may happen to him every day which might shake his faith in

that system ; and while he moves about as mere man, his faith is shaken. But when he settles himself back into the phase of his being as author, the mere act of taking pen in hand and smoothing the paper before him restores his speculations to their ancient mechanical train. The system, the beloved system, reasserts its tyrannic sway, and he either ignores, or moulds into fresh proofs of his theory as author, all which, an hour before, had given his theory the lie in his living perceptions as man.

I adhered to my system ;—I continued my work. Here, in the barbarous desert, was a link between me and the Cities of Europe. All else might break down under me. The love I had dreamed of was blotted out from the world and might never be restored ; my hearth might be lonely, my life be an exile's. My reason might, at last, give way before the spectres which awed my senses, or the sorrows which stormed my heart. But here, at least, was a monument of my rational thoughtful Me—of my individualised identity in multiform creation. And my mind, in the noon of its force, would shed its light on the earth when my form was resolved to its elements. Alas ! in this very yearning for the Hereafter, though but the Hereafter of a Name, could I see only the craving of Mind, and hear not the whisper of Soul ?

The avocations of a colonist, usually so active, had little interest for me. This vast territorial lordship, in which, could I have endeared its possession by the hopes that animate a Founder, I should have felt all

the zest and the pride of ownership, was but the run of a common to the passing emigrant, who would leave no son to inherit the tardy products of his labour. I was not goaded to industry by the stimulus of need. I could only be ruined if I risked all my capital in the attempt to improve. I lived, therefore, amongst my fertile pastures, as careless of culture as the English occupant of the Highland moor, which he rents for the range of its solitudes.

I knew, indeed, that if ever I became avaricious, I might swell my modest affluence into absolute wealth. I had revisited the spot in which I had discovered the nugget of gold, and had found the precious metal in rich abundance just under the first coverings of the alluvial soil. I concealed my discovery from all. I knew that, did I proclaim it, the charm of my bush-life would be gone. My fields would be infested by all the wild adventurers who gather to gold as the vultures of prey round a carcass; my servants would desert me, my very flocks would be shepherdless!

Months again rolled on months. I had just approached the close of my beloved Work, when it was again suspended, and by an anguish keener than all which I had previously known.

Lilian became alarmingly ill. Her state of health, long gradually declining, had hitherto admitted checkered intervals of improvement, and exhibited no symptoms of actual danger. But now she was seized with a kind of chronic fever, attended with absolute privation of sleep, an aversion to even the lightest nourishment,

and an acute nervous susceptibility to all the outward impressions of which she had long seemed so unconscious; morbidly alive to the faintest sound, shrinking from the light as from a torture. Her previous impatience at my entrance into her room became aggravated into vehement emotions, convulsive paroxysms of distress; so that Faber banished me from her chamber, and, with a heart bleeding at every fibre, I submitted to the cruel sentence.

Faber had taken up his abode in my house and brought Amy with him; one or the other never left Lilian, night or day. The great physician spoke doubtfully of the case, but not despairingly.

"Remember," he said, "that in spite of the want of sleep, the abstinence from food, the form has not wasted as it would do were this fever inevitably mortal. It is upon that phenomenon I build a hope that I have not been mistaken in the opinion I hazarded from the first. We are now in the midst of the critical struggle between life and reason; if she preserve the one, my conviction is that she will regain the other. That seeming antipathy to yourself is a good omen. You are inseparably associated with her intellectual world; in proportion as she revives to it, must become vivid and powerful the reminiscences of the shock that annulled, for a time, that world to her. So I welcome, rather than fear, the over-susceptibility of the awakening senses to external sights and sounds. A few days will decide if I am right. In this climate the progress of acute maladies is swift, but the recovery

from them is yet more startlingly rapid. Wait—endure—be prepared to submit to the will of Heaven; but do not despond of its mercy.”

I rushed away from the consoler—away into the thick of the forests, the heart of the solitude. All around me, there, was joyous with life; the locust sang amidst the herbage; the cranes gambolled on the banks of the creek; the squirrel-like opossums frolicked on the feathery boughs. “And what,” said I to myself—“what if that which seems so fabulous in the distant being whose existence has bewitched my own, be substantially true? What if to some potent medicament Margrave owes his glorious vitality, his radiant youth? Oh! that I had not so disdainfully turned away from his hinted solicitations—to what?—to nothing guiltier than lawful experiment. Had I been less devoted a bigot to this vain schoolcraft, which we call the Medical Art, and which alone, in this age of science, has made no perceptible progress since the days of its earliest teachers—had I said, in the true humility of genuine knowledge, ‘These alchemists were men of genius and thought; we owe to them nearly all the grand hints of our chemical science—is it likely that they would have been wholly drivellers and idiots in the one faith they clung to the most?’—had I said that, I might now have no fear of losing my Lilian. Why, after all, should there not be in Nature one primary essence, one master substance, in which is stored the specific nutriment of life?”

Thus incoherently muttering to the woods what my

pride of reason would not have suffered me gravely to say to my fellow-men, I fatigued my tormented spirits into a gloomy calm, and mechanically retraced my steps at the decline of day. I seated myself at the door of my solitary log-hut, leaning my cheek upon my hand, and musing. Wearily I looked up, roused by a discord of clattering hoofs and lumbering wheels on the hollow-sounding grass-track. A crazy groaning vehicle, drawn by four horses, emerged from the copse of gum-trees—fast, fast along the road, which no such pompous vehicle had traversed since that which had borne me—luxurious satrap for an early colonist—to my lodge in the wilderness. What emigrant, rich enough to squander in the hire of such an equipage more than its cost in England, could thus be entering on my waste domain? An ominous thrill shot through me.

The driver—perhaps some broken-down son of luxury in the Old World, fit for nothing in the New World but to ply, for hire, the task that might have led to his ruin when plied in sport—stopped at the door of my hut, and called out, “Friend, is not this the great Fenwick Section, and is not yonder long pile of building the Master’s house?”

Before I could answer I heard a faint voice, within the vehicle, speaking to the driver; the last nodded, descended from his seat, opened the carriage-door, and offered his arm to a man, who, waving aside the proffered aid, descended slowly and feebly; paused a moment, as if for breath, and then, leaning on his staff,

walked from the road, across the sward rank with luxuriant herbage, through the little gate in the new-set fragrant wattle-fence, wearily, languidly, halting often, till he stood facing me, leaning both wan and emaciated hands upon his staff, and his meagre form shrinking deep within the folds of a cloak lined thick with costly sables. His face was sharp, his complexion of a livid yellow, his eyes shone out from their hollow orbits, unnaturally enlarged and fatally bright. Thus, in ghastly contrast to his former splendour of youth and opulence of life, Margrave stood before me.

“I come to you,” said Margrave, in accents hoarse and broken, “from the shores of the East. Give me shelter and rest. I have that to say which will more than repay you.”

Whatever, till that moment, my hate and my fear of this unexpected visitant, hate would have been inhumanity—fear a meanness—conceived for a creature so awfully stricken down.

Silently, involuntarily, I led him into the house. There he rested a few minutes, with closed eyes and painful gasps for breath. Meanwhile, the driver brought from the carriage a travelling-bag and a small wooden chest or coffer, strongly banded with iron clamps. Margrave, looking up as the man drew near, exclaimed fiercely, “Who told you to touch that chest? How dare you? Take it from that man, Fenwick! Place it here—here by my side!”

I took the chest from the driver, whose rising anger, at being so imperiously rated in the land of democratic

equality, was appeased by the gold which Margrave lavishly flung to him.

“Take care of the poor gentleman, squire,” he whispered to me, in the spontaneous impulse of gratitude—“I fear he will not trouble you long. He must be monstrous rich. Arrived in a vessel hired all to himself, and a train of outlandish attendants, whom he has left behind in the town yonder! May I bait my horses in your stables? They have come a long way.”

I pointed to the neighbouring stables, and the man nodded his thanks, remounted his box, and drove off.

I returned to Margrave. A faint smile came to his lips as I placed the chest beside him.

“Ay, ay!” he muttered. “Safe! safe! I shall soon be well again—very soon! And now I can sleep in peace!”

I led him into an inner room, in which there was a bed. He threw himself on it with a loud sigh of relief. Soon, half raising himself on his elbow he exclaimed, “The chest—bring it hither! I need it always beside me! There, there! Now for a few hours of sleep; and then, if I can take food, or some such restoring cordial as your skill may suggest, I shall be strong enough to talk. We will talk!—we will talk!”

His eyes closed heavily as his voice fell into a drowsy mutter: a moment more, and he was asleep.

I watched beside him in mingled wonder and compassion. Looking into that face, so altered yet still so

young, I could not sternly question what had been the evil of that mystic life, which seemed now oozing away through the last sands in the hour-glass. I placed my hand softly on his pulse: it scarcely beat. I put my ear to his breast, and involuntarily sighed, as I distinguished in its fluttering heave that dull dumb sound, in which the heart seems knelling itself to the greedy grave!

Was this, indeed, the potent magician whom I had so feared?—this the guide to the Rosierucians' secret of life's renewal, in whom, but an hour or two ago, my fancies gulled my credulous trust?

But suddenly, even while thus chiding my wild superstitions, a fear, that to most will seem scarcely less superstitious, shot across me. Could Lilian be affected by the near neighbourhood of one to whose magnetic influence she had once been so strangely subjected? I left Margrave still sleeping, closed and locked the door of the hut, went back to my dwelling, and met Amy at the threshold. Her smile was so cheering that I felt at once relieved.

"Hush!" said the child, putting her finger to her lips, "she is so quiet! I was coming in search of you, with a message from her."

"From Lilian to me—what! to me?"

"Hush! About an hour ago, she beckoned me to draw near to her, and then said, very softly: 'Tell Allen, that light is coming back to me, and it all settles on him—on him. Tell him that I pray to be spared to walk by his side on earth, hand-in-hand to

that heaven which is no dream, Amy. Tell him that ; —no dream ! ’ ”

While the child spoke my tears gushed, and the strong hands in which I veiled my face quivered like the leaf of the aspen. And when I could command my voice, I said plaintively,—

“ May I not, then, see her?—only for a moment, and answer her message, though but by a look ? ”

“ No, no ! ”

“ No ! Where is Faber ? ”

“ Gone into the forest in search of some herbs, but he gave me this note for you. ”

I wiped the blinding tears from my eyes, and read these lines :—

“ I have, though with hesitation, permitted Amy to tell you the cheering words, by which our beloved patient confirms my belief that reason is coming back to her—slowly, labouringly, but if she survive, for permanent restoration. On no account attempt to precipitate or disturb the work of Nature. As dangerous as a sudden glare of light to eyes long blind and newly regaining vision in the friendly and soothing dark, would be the agitation that your presence at this crisis would cause. Confide in me. ”

I remained brooding over these lines and over Lilian’s message, long and silently, while Amy’s soothing whispers stole into my ear, soft as the murmurs of a rill heard in the gloom of forests. Rousing myself at length, my thoughts returned to Margrave. Doubtless he would soon awake. I bade Amy bring me

such slight nutriment as I thought best suited to his enfeebled state, telling her it was for a sick traveller resting himself in my hut. When Amy returned I took from her the little basket with which she was charged, and having, meanwhile, made a careful selection from the contents of my medicine-chest, went back to the hut. I had not long resumed my place beside Margrave's pillow before he awoke.

"What o'clock is it?" he asked, with an anxious voice.

"About seven."

"Not later? That is well; my time is precious."

"Compose yourself, and eat."

I placed the food before him, and he partook of it, though sparingly, and as if with effort. He then dozed for a short time, again woke up, and impatiently demanded the cordial, which I had prepared in the meanwhile. Its effect was greater and more immediate than I could have anticipated, proving, perhaps, how much of youth there was still left in his system, however undermined and ravaged by disease. Colour came back to his cheek, his voice grew perceptibly stronger. And as I lighted the lamp on the table near us—for it was growing dark—he gathered himself up, and spoke thus:—

"You remember that I once pressed on you certain experiments. My object then was to discover the materials from which is extracted the specific that enables the organs of life to expel disease and regain vigour. In that hope, I sought your intimacy. An intimacy you gave, but withdrew."

“Dare you complain? Who and what was the being from whose intimacy I shrank appalled?”

“Ask what questions you please,” cried Margrave, impatiently, “later,—if I have strength left to answer them, but do not interrupt me, while I husband my force to say what alone is important to me and to you. Disappointed in the hopes I had placed in you, I resolved to repair to Paris—that great furnace of all bold ideas. I questioned learned formalists; I listened to audacious empirics. The first, with all their boasted knowledge, were too timid to concede my premises; the second, with all their speculative daring, too knavish to let me trust to their conclusions. I found but one man, a Sicilian, who comprehended the secrets that are called occult, and had the courage to meet Nature and all her agencies face to face. He believed, and sincerely, that he was approaching the grand result, at the very moment when he perished from want of the common precautions which a tyro in chemistry would have taken. At his death the gaudy city became hateful; all its pretended pleasures only served to exhaust life the faster. The true joys of youth are those of the wild bird and wild brute, in the healthful enjoyment of Nature. In cities, youth is but old age with a varnish. I fled to the East; I passed through the tents of the Arabs; I was guided—no matter by whom or by what—to the house of a Dervish, who had had for his teacher the most erudite master of secrets occult, whom I knew years ago at Aleppo—why that exclamation?”

“Proceed. What I have to say will come—later.”

“From this Dervish I half forced and half purchased the secret I sought to obtain. I now know from what peculiar substance the so-called elixir of life is extracted ; I know also the steps of the process through which that task is accomplished. You smile incredulously ? What is your doubt ? State it while I rest for a moment. My breath labours ; give me more of the cordial.”

“Need I tell you my doubt ? You have, you say, at your command the elixir of life of which Cagliostro did not leave his disciples the recipe ; and you stretch out your hand for a vulgar cordial which any village chemist could give you !”

“I can explain this apparent contradiction. The process by which the elixir is extracted from the material which hoards its essence, is one that requires a hardihood of courage which few possess. This Dervish, who had passed through that process once, was deaf to all prayer, and unmoved by all bribes, to attempt it again. He was poor ; for the secret by which metals may be transmuted is not, as the old alchemists seem to imply, identical with that by which the elixir of life is extracted. He had only been enabled to discover, in the niggard strata of the lands within range of his travel, a few scanty morsels of the glorious substance. From these he had extracted scarcely enough of the elixir to fill a third of that little glass which I have just drained. He guarded every drop for himself. Who that holds healthful life as the one boon

above all price to the living, would waste upon others what prolongs and recruits his own being? Therefore, though he sold me his secret, he would not sell me his treasure."

"Any quack may sell you the information how to make not only an elixir, but a sun and a moon, and then scare you from the experiment by tales of the danger of trying it! How do you know that this essence which the Dervish possessed was the elixir of life, since, it seems, you have not tried on yourself what effect its precious drops could produce? Poor wretch! who once seemed to me so awfully potent, do you come to the Antipodes in search of a drug that only exists in the fables by which a child is amused?"

"The elixir of life is no fable," cried Margrave, with a kindling of eye, a power of voice, a dilation of form, that startled me in one just before so feeble. "That elixir was bright in my veins when we last met. From that golden draught of the life-spring of joy I took all that can gladden creation. What sage would not have exchanged his wearisome knowledge for my lusty revels with Nature? What monarch would not have bartered his crown, with its brain-ache of care, for the radiance that circled my brows, flashing out from the light that was in me? Oh again, oh again! to enjoy the freedom of air with the bird, and the glow of the sun with the lizard; to sport through the blooms of the earth Nature's playmate and darling; to face, in the forest and desert, the pard and the lion, —Nature's bravest and fiercest,—her first-born, the

heir of her realm, with the rest of her children for slaves !”

As these words burst from his lips, there was a wild grandeur in the aspect of this enigmatical being which I had never beheld in the former time of his affluent, dazzling youth. And, indeed, in his language, and in the thoughts it clothed, there was an earnestness, a concentration, a directness, a purpose, which had seemed wanting to his desultory talk in the earlier days. I expected that reaction of languor and exhaustion would follow his vehement outbreak of passion ; but, after a short pause, he went on with steady accents. His will was sustaining his strength. He was determined to force his convictions on me, and the vitality, once so rich, rallied all its lingering forces to the aid of his intense desire.

“I tell you, then,” he resumed, with deliberate calmness, “that, years ago, I tested in my own person that essence which is the sovereign medicament. In me, as you saw me at L——, you beheld the proof of its virtues. Feeble and ill as I am now, my state was incalculably more hopeless when formerly restored by the elixir. He from whom I then took the sublime restorative, died without revealing the secret of its composition. What I obtained was only just sufficient to recruit the lamp of my life, then dying down—and no drop was left for renewing the light which wastes its own rays in the air that it gilds. Though the Dervish would not sell me his treasure, he permitted me to see it. The appearance and odour of this essence

are strangely peculiar—unmistakable by one who has once beheld and partaken of it. In short, I recognised in the hands of the Dervish the bright life-renewer, as I had borne it away from the corpse of the Sage of Aleppo.”

“Hold! Are you then, in truth, the murderer of Haroun, and is your true name Louis Grayle?”

“I am no murderer, and Louis Grayle did not leave me his name. I again adjure you to postpone for this night, at least, the questions you wish to address to me.

“Seeing that this obstinate pauper possessed that for which the pale owners of millions, at the first touch of palsy or gout, would consent to be paupers, of course I coveted the possession of the essence even more than the knowledge of the substance from which it is extracted. I had no coward fear of the experiment, which this timid driveller had not the nerve to renew. But still the experiment might fail. I must traverse land and sea to find the fit place for it. While, in the rags of the Dervish, the unfailing result of the experiment was at hand. The Dervish suspected my design—he dreaded my power. He fled on the very night in which I had meant to seize what he refused to sell me. After all, I should have done him no great wrong; for I should have left him wealth enough to transport himself to any soil in which the material for the elixir may be most abundant; and the desire of life would have given his shrinking nerves the courage to replenish its ravished store.

I had Arabs in my pay, who obeyed me as hounds their master. I chased the fugitive. I came on his track—reached a house in a miserable village, in which, I was told, he had entered but an hour before. The day was declining—the light in the room imperfect. I saw in a corner what seemed to me the form of the Dervish—stooped to seize it, and my hand closed on an asp. The artful Dervish had so piled his rags that they took the shape of the form they had clothed, and he had left, as a substitute for the giver of life, the venomous reptile of death.

“The strength of my system enabled me to survive the effect of the poison ; but during the torpor that numbed me, my Arabs, alarmed, gave no chase to my quarry. At last, though enfeebled and languid, I was again on my horse :—again the pursuit—again the track ! I learned—but this time by a knowledge surer than man’s—that the Dervish had taken his refuge in a hamlet that had sprung up over the site of a city once famed through Assyria. The same voice that informed me of his whereabouts warned me not to pursue. I rejected the warning. In my eager impatience I sprang on to the chase ; in my fearless resolve I felt sure of the prey. I arrived at the hamlet wearied out, for my forces were no longer the same since the bite of the asp. The Dervish eluded me still ; he had left the floors, on which I sank exhausted, but a few minutes before my horse stopped at the door. The carpet, on which he had rested, still lay on the ground. I dismissed the

youngest and keenest of my troop in search of the fugitive. Sure that this time he would not escape, my eyes closed in sleep.

“How long I slept I know not—a long dream of solitude, fever, and anguish. Was it the curse of the Dervish’s carpet? Was it a taint in the walls of the house, or of the air, which broods sickly and rank over places where cities lie buried? I know not; but the Pest of the East had seized me in slumber. When my senses recovered I found myself alone, plundered of my arms, despoiled of such gold as I had carried about me. All had deserted and left me, as the living leave the dead whom the Plague has claimed for its own. As soon as I could stand I crawled from the threshold. The moment my voice was heard, my face seen, the whole squalid populace rose as on a wild beast—a mad dog. I was driven from the place with imprecations and stones, as a miscreant whom the Plague had overtaken while plotting the death of a holy man. Bruised and bleeding, but still defying, I turned in wrath on that dastardly rabble; they slunk away from my path. I knew the land for miles around. I had been in that land years, long years, ago. I came at last to the road which the caravans take on their way to Damascus. There I was found, speechless and seemingly lifeless, by some European travellers. Conveyed to Damascus, I languished for weeks between life and death. But for the virtue of that essence, which lingered yet in my veins, I could not have survived—even thus feeble and shattered.

I need not say that I now abandoned all thought of discovering the Dervish. I had at least his secret, if I had failed of the paltry supply he had drawn from its uses. Such appliances as he had told me were needful are procured in the East with more ease than in Europe. To sum up, I am here, instructed in all the knowledge, and supplied with all the aids, which warrant me in saying, ‘Do you care for new life in its richest enjoyments, if not for yourself, for one whom you love and would reprieve from the grave? Then, share with me in a task that a single night will accomplish, and ravish a prize by which the life that you value the most will be saved from the dust and the worm, to live on, ever young, ever blooming, when each infant, new-born while I speak, shall have passed to the grave. Nay, where is the limit to life, while the earth hides the substance by which life is renewed?’”

I give as faithfully as I can recall them the words in which Margrave addressed me. But who can guess by cold words transcribed, even were they artfully ranged by a master of language, the effect words produce when warm from the breath of the speaker? Ask one of an audience which some orator held enthralled, why his words do not quicken a beat in the reader’s pulse, and the answer of one who had listened will be, “The words took their charm from the voice and the eye, the aspect, the manner, the man!” So it was with the incomprehensible being before me. Though his youth was faded, though his beauty was

dimmed, though my fancies clothed him with memories of abhorrent dread, though my reason opposed his audacious beliefs and assumptions, still he charmed and spellbound me—still he was the mystical fascinator—still, if the legends of magic had truth for their basis, he was the *born magician*; as genius, in what calling soever, *is* born with the gift to enchant and subdue us.

Constraining myself to answer calmly, I said, “You have told me your story; you have defined the object of the experiment in which you ask me to aid. You do right to bid me postpone my replies or my questions. Seek to recruit by sleep the strength you have so sorely tasked. To-morrow——”

“To-morrow, ere night, you will decide whether the man whom out of all earth I have selected to aid me, shall be the foe to condemn me to perish! I tell you plainly I need your aid, and your prompt aid. Three days from this, and all aid will be too late!”

I had already gained the door of the room, when he called to me to come back.

“You do not live in this hut, but with your family yonder. Do not tell them that I am here; let no one but yourself see me as I now am. Lock the door of the hut when you quit it. I should not close my eyes if I were not secure from intruders.”

“There is but one in my house, or in these parts, whom I would except from the interdict you impose. You are aware of your own imminent danger; the life, which you believe the discovery of a Dervish will in-

definitely prolong, seems to my eye of physician to hang on a thread. I have already formed my own conjecture as to the nature of the disease that enfeebles you. But I would fain compare that conjecture with the weightier opinion of one whose experience and skill are superior to mine. Permit me, then, when I return to you to-morrow, to bring with me the great physician to whom I refer. His name will not, perhaps, be unknown to you : I speak of Julius Faber."

"A physician of the schools! I can guess well enough how learnedly he would prate, and how little he could do. But I will not object to his visit, if it satisfies you that, since I should die under the hands of the doctors, I may be permitted to indulge my own whim in placing my hopes in a Dervish. Yet stay. You have, doubtless, spoken of me to this Julius Faber, your fellow-physician and friend? Promise me, if you bring him here, that you will not name me—that you will not repeat to him the tale I have told you, or the hope which has led me to these shores. What I have told to you, no matter whether, at this moment, you consider me the dupe of a chimera, is still under the seal of the confidence which a patient reposes in the physician he himself selects for his confidant. I select you, and not Julius Faber !"

"Be it as you will," said I, after a moment's reflection. "The moment you make yourself my patient I am bound to consider what is best for you. And you may more respect, and profit by, an opinion based upon your purely physical condition than by one in

which you might suppose the advice was directed rather to the disease of the mind than to that of the body."

"How amazed and indignant your brother-physician will be if he ever see me a second time ! How learnedly he will prove that, according to all correct principles of science and nature, I ought to be dead !"

He uttered this jest with a faint dreary echo of his old merry, melodious laugh, then turned his face to the wall ; and so I left him to repose.

CHAPTER LXXV.

I FOUND Mrs Ashleigh waiting for me in her usual sitting-room. She was in tears. She had begun to despond of Lilian's recovery, and she infected me with her own alarm. However, I disguised my participation in her fears, soothed and sustained her as I best could, and persuaded her to retire to rest. I saw Faber for a few minutes before I sought my own chamber. He assured me that there was no perceptible change for the worse in Lilian's physical state since he had last seen me, and that her mind, even within the last few hours, had become decidedly more clear. He thought that, within the next twenty-four hours, the reason would make a strong and successful effort for complete recovery ; but he declined to hazard more than a hope that the effort would not exhaust the enfeebled powers of the frame. He himself was so in need of a few hours of rest that I ceased to harass him with questions which he could not answer, and fears which he could not appease. Before leaving him for the night, I told him briefly that there was a traveller in my hut smitten by a disease which seemed to me so grave that I would ask his opinion of the case, if he could accompany me to the hut the next morning.

My own thoughts that night were not such as would suffer me to sleep.

Before Margrave's melancholy state much of my former fear and abhorrence faded away. This being, so exceptional that fancy might well invest him with preternatural attributes, was now reduced by human suffering to human sympathy and comprehension; yet his utter want of conscience was still as apparent as in his days of joyous animal spirits. With what hideous candour he had related his perfidy and ingratitude to the man to whom, in his belief, he owed an inestimable obligation, and with what insensibility to the signal retribution which in most natures would have awakened remorse!

And by what dark hints and confessions did he seem to confirm the incredible memoir of Sir Philip Derval! He owned that he had borne from the corpse of Haroun the medicament to which he ascribed his recovery from a state yet more hopeless than that under which he now laboured! He had alluded, rapidly, obscurely, to some knowledge at his command "surer than man's!" And now, even now—the mere wreck of his former existence—by what strange charm did he still control and confuse my reason? And how was it that I felt myself murmuring, again and again, "But what, after all, if his hope be no chimera, and if Nature do hide a secret by which I could save the life of my beloved Lilian?"

And again and again, as that thought would force itself on me, I rose and crept to Lilian's threshold, listening to catch the faintest sound of her breathing.

All still, all dark ! In that sufferer recognised science detects no mortal disease, yet dares not bid me rely on its amplest resources of skill to turn aside from her slumber the stealthy advance of death ; while in yon log-hut one whose malady recognised science could not doubt to be mortal has composed himself to sleep confident of life ! Recognised science ! Recognised ignorance ! The science of to-day is the ignorance of to-morrow ! Every year some bold guess lights up a truth to which, but the year before, the schoolmen of science were as blinded as moles.

“What, then,” my lips kept repeating—“what if Nature do hide a secret by which the life of my life can be saved ! What do we know of the secrets of Nature ? What said Newton himself of his knowledge ? ‘I am like a child picking up pebbles and shells on the sand, while the great ocean of Truth lies all undiscovered around me !’ And did Newton himself, in the ripest growth of his matchless intellect, hold the creed of the alchemists in scorn ? Had he not given to one object of their research, in the transmutation of metals, his days and his nights ? Is there proof that he ever convinced himself that the research was the dream, which we, who are not Newtons, call it ?* ”

* “Besides the three great subjects of Newton’s labours—the fluxional calculus, physical astronomy, and optics—a very large portion of his time, while resident in his college, was devoted to researches of which scarcely a trace remains. Alchemy, which had fascinated so many eager and ambitious minds, seems to have tempted Newton with an overwhelming force. What theories he formed, what experiments he tried, in that laboratory where, it is said, the fire was scarcely extinguished for weeks together, will never

And that other great sage, inferior only to Newton—the calculating doubt-weigher, Descartes—had he not believed in the yet nobler hope of the alchemists—believed in some occult nostrum or process by which human life could attain to the age of the Patriarchs?” *

be known. It is certain that no success attended his labours ; and Newton was not a man—like Kepler—to detail to the world all the hopes and disappointments, all the crude and mystical fancies, which mixed themselves up with his career of philosophy. . . . Many years later we find Newton in correspondence with Locke, with reference to a mysterious red earth by which Boyle, who was then recently dead, had asserted that he could effect the grand desideratum of multiplying gold. By this time, however, Newton's faith had become somewhat shaken by the unsatisfactory communications which he had himself received from Boyle on the subject of the golden recipe, though he did not abandon the idea of giving the experiment a further trial as soon as the weather should become suitable for furnace experiments.”—‘Quarterly Review,’ No. 220, pp. 125, 126.

* Southey, in his ‘Doctor,’ vol. vi. p. 2, reports the conversation of Sir Kenelm Digby with Descartes, in which the great geometrician said, “That as for rendering man immortal, it was what he could not venture to promise, but that he was very sure he could prolong his life to the standard of the patriarchs.” And Southey adds, “that St Evremond, to whom Digby repeated this, says that this opinion of Descartes was well known both to his friends in Holland and in France.” By the stress Southey lays on this hearsay evidence, it is clear that he was not acquainted with the works and biography of Descartes, or he would have gone to the fountainhead for authority on Descartes's opinions—viz., Descartes himself. It is to be wished that Southey had done so, for no one more than he would have appreciated the exquisitely candid and lovable nature of the illustrious Frenchman, and the sincerity with which he cherished in his heart whatever doctrine he conceived in his understanding. Descartes, whose knowledge of anatomy was considerable, had that passion for the art of medicine which is almost inseparable from the pursuit of natural philosophy. At the age of twenty-four he had sought (in Germany) to obtain initiation into the brotherhood of the Rosicrucians, but unluckily could not discover any member of the

In thoughts like these the night wore away, the moonbeams that streamed through my window lighting up the spacious solitudes beyond—mead and creek, forest-land, mountain-top—and the silence without broken by the wild cry of the night-hawk and the

society to introduce him. “He desired,” says Cousin, “to assure the health of man, diminish his ills, extend his existence. He was terrified by the rapid and almost momentary passage of man upon earth. He believed it was not, perhaps, impossible to prolong its duration.” There is a hidden recess of grandeur in this idea, and the means proposed by Descartes for the execution of his project were not less grand. In his ‘Discourse on Method,’ Descartes says, “If it is possible to find some means to render generally men more wise and more able than they have been till now, it is, I believe, in medicine that those means must be sought. . . . I am sure that there is no one, even in the medical profession, who will not avow that all which one knows of the medical art is almost nothing in comparison to that which remains to learn, and that one could be exempted from an infinity of maladies, both of body and mind, and even, perhaps, from the decrepitude of old age, if one had sufficient lore of their causes and of all the remedies which nature provides for them. Therefore, having *design to employ all my life in the research of a science so necessary, and having discovered a path which appears to me such that one ought infallibly, in following, to find it*, if one is not hindered prematurely by the brevity of life, or by the defects of experience, I consider that there is no better remedy against those two hindrances than to communicate faithfully to the public the little I have found,” &c.—‘Discours de la Méthode,’ vol. i.; Œuvres de Descartes, Cousin’s edition. And again, in his ‘Correspondence’ (vol. ix. p. 341), he says, “The conservation of health has been always the principal object of my studies, and I have no doubt that there is a means of acquiring much knowledge touching medicine which, up to this time, is ignored.” He then refers to his meditated Treatise on Animals as only an entrance upon that knowledge. But whatever secrets Descartes may have thought to discover, they are not made known to the public according to his promise. And in a letter to M. Chamut, written 1646 (four years before he died), he says ingenuously: “I will tell you in confidence that the notion, such as it is, which I have endeavoured to acquire in

sibilant melancholy dirge of the shining chrysococyx ; *—a bird that never sings but at night, and obstinately haunts the roofs of the sick and dying, ominous of woe and death.

But up sprang the sun, and, chasing these gloomy sounds, out burst the wonderful chorus of Australian groves, the great kingfisher opening the jocund melodious babble with the glee of his social laugh.

And now I heard Faber's step in Lilian's room—heard, through the door, her soft voice, though I could not distinguish the words. It was not long before I saw the kind physician standing at the threshold of my chamber. He pressed his finger to his lip, and made me a sign to follow him. I obeyed, with noiseless tread and stifled breathing. He awaited me in the garden under the flowering acacias, passed his arm in mine, and drew me into the open pasture-land.

“Compose yourself,” he then said ; “I bring you physical philosophy, had greatly assisted me to establish certain foundations for moral philosophy ; and that I am more easily satisfied upon this point than I am on many others touching medicine, to which I have, nevertheless, devoted much more time. So that,” (adds the grand thinker with a pathetic nobleness)—“so that, *instead of finding the means to preserve life, I have found another good, more easy, and more sure, which is—not to fear death.*”

* *Chrysococcyx lucidus*—viz., the bird popularly called the shining or bronzed cuckoo. “Its note is an exceedingly melancholy whistle, heard at night, when it is very annoying to any sick or nervous person who may be inclined to sleep. I have known many instances where the bird has been perched on a tree in the vicinity of the room of an invalid uttering its mournful notes, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that it could be dislodged from its position.”—Dr Bennett's ‘Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia.’

tidings both of gladness and of fear. Your Lilian's mind is restored ; even the memories which had been swept away by the fever that followed her return to her home in L—— are returning, though as yet indistinct. She yearns to see you, to bless you for all your noble devotion, your generous, great-hearted love ; but I forbid such interview now. If, in a few hours, she become either decidedly stronger or decidedly more enfeebled, you shall be summoned to her side. Even if you are condemned to a loss for which the sole consolation must be placed in the life hereafter, you shall have, at least, the last mortal commune of soul with soul. Courage—courage ! you are man ! Bear as man what you have so often bid other men submit to endure.”

I had flung myself on the ground—writhing worm that had no home but on earth ! Man, indeed ! Man ! All, at that moment, I took from manhood was its acute sensibility to love and to anguish.

But after all such paroxysms of mortal pain there comes a strange lull. Thought itself halts, like the still hush of water between two descending torrents. I rose in a calm, which Faber might well mistake for fortitude.

Well,” I said, quietly, “fulfil your promise. If Lilian is to pass away from me, I shall see her, at least, again ; no wall, you tell me, between our minds ; mind to mind once more—once more !”

“Allen,” said Faber, mournfully and softly, “why do you shun to repeat my words—soul to soul ?”

“Ay, ay—I understand. Those words mean that you have resigned all hope that Lilian’s life will linger here, when her mind comes back in full consciousness ; I know well that last lightning flash and the darkness which swallows it up !”

“You exaggerate my fears. I have not resigned the hope that Lilian will survive the struggle through which she is passing, but it would be cruel to deceive you—my hope is weaker than it was.”

“Ay, ay. Again, I understand ! Your science is in fault—it desponds. Its last trust is in the wonderful resources of Nature—the vitality stored in the young !”

“You have said : those resources of Nature *are* wondrous. The vitality of youth is a fountain springing up from the deeps out of sight, when, a moment before, we had measured the drops oozing out from the sands, and thought that the well was exhausted.”

“Come with me—come. I told you of another sufferer yonder. I want your opinion of his case. But can you be spared a few minutes from Lilian’s side ?”

“Yes ; I left her asleep. What is the case that perplexes your eye of physician, which is usually keener than mine, despite all the length of my practice ?”

“The sufferer is young—his organisation rare in its vigour. He has gone through and survived assaults upon life that are commonly fatal. His system has been poisoned by the fangs of a venomous asp, and shattered by the blast of the plague. These alone, I

believe, would not suffice to destroy him. But he is one who has a strong dread of death. And while the heart was thus languid and feeble, it has been gnawed by emotions of hope or of fear. I suspect that he is dying, not from the bite of the reptile, not from the taint of the pestilence, but from the hope and the fear that have overtaken the heart's functions. Judge for yourself."

We were now at the door of the hut. I unlocked it: we entered. Margrave had quitted his bed, and was pacing the room slowly. His step was less feeble, his countenance less haggard than on the previous evening.

He submitted himself to Faber's questioning with a quiet indifference, and evidently cared nothing for any opinion which the great physician might found on his replies.

When Faber had learned all he could, he said, with a grave smile: "I see that my advice will have little weight with you; such as it is, at least reflect on it. The conclusions to which your host arrived in his view of your case, and which he confided to me, are, in my humble judgment, correct. I have no doubt that the great organ of the heart is involved in the cause of your sufferings; but the heart is a noble and much-enduring organ. I have known men in whom it has been more severely and unequivocally affected with disease than it is in you, live on for many years, and ultimately die of some other disorder. But then life was held, as yours must be held, upon one condition—repose.

I enjoin you to abstain from all violent action—to shun all excitements that cause moral disturbance. You are young ; would you live on, you must live as the old. More than this—it is my duty to warn you that your tenure on earth is very precarious ; you may attain to many years—you may be suddenly called hence to-morrow. The best mode to regard this uncertainty with the calm in which is your only chance of long life, is so to arrange all your worldly affairs, and so to discipline all your human anxieties, as to feel always prepared for the summons that may come without warning. For the rest, quit this climate as soon as you can—it is the climate in which the blood courses too quickly for one who should shun all excitement. Seek the most equable atmosphere—choose the most tranquil pursuits—and Fenwick himself, in his magnificent pride of stature and strength, may be nearer the grave than you are.”

“Your opinion coincides with that I have just heard ?” asked Margrave, turning to me.

“In much—yes.”

“It is more favourable than I should have supposed. I am far from disdaining the advice so kindly offered. Permit me, in turn, two or three questions, Dr Faber. Do you prescribe to me no drugs from your pharmacopœia ? ”

“Drugs may palliate many sufferings incidental to organic disease ; but drugs cannot reach organic disease itself.”

“Do you believe that, even where disease is plainly

organic, Nature herself has no alterative and preparative powers, by which the organ assailed may recover itself?"

"A few exceptional instances of such forces in nature are upon record; but we must go by general laws, and not by exceptions."

"Have you never known instances—do you not at this moment know one—in which a patient whose malady baffles the doctor's skill, imagines or dreams of a remedy? Call it a whim if you please, learned sir; do you not listen to the whim, and, in despair of your own prescriptions, comply with those of the patient?"

Faber changed countenance, and even started. Margrave watched him and laughed.

"You grant that there are such cases, in which the patient gives the law to the physician. Now, apply your experience to my case. Suppose some strange fancy had seized upon my imagination—that is the doctors' cant word for all phenomena which we call exceptional—some strange fancy that I had thought of a cure for this disease for which you have no drugs; and suppose this fancy of mine to be so strong, so vivid, that to deny me its gratification would produce the very emotion from which you warn me as fatal—storm the heart, that you would soothe to repose, by the passions of rage and despair—would you, as my trusted physician, concede or deny me my whim?"

"Can you ask? I should grant it at once, if I had no reason to know that the thing that you fancied was harmful."

“Good man and wise doctor! I have no other question to ask. I thank you.”

Faber looked hard on the young, wan face, over which played a smile of triumph and irony; then turned away with an expression of doubt and trouble on his noble countenance. I followed him silently into the open air.

“Who and what is this visitor of yours?” he asked abruptly.

“Who and what! I cannot tell you.”

Faber remained some moments musing, and muttering slowly to himself, “Tut! but a chance coincidence—a haphazard allusion to a fact which he could not have known!”

“Faber,” said I, abruptly, “can it be that Lilian is the patient in whose self-suggested remedies you confide more than in the various learning at command of your practised skill?”

“I cannot deny it,” replied Faber, reluctantly. “In the intervals of that suspense from waking sense, which in her is not sleep, nor yet altogether catalepsy, she has, for the last few days, stated accurately the precise moment in which the trance—if I may so call it—would pass away, and prescribed for herself the remedies that should be then administered. In every instance, the remedies so self-prescribed, though certainly not those which would have occurred to my mind, have proved efficacious. Her rapid progress to reason I ascribe to the treatment she herself ordained in her trance, without remembrance of her own sug-

gestions when she awoke. I had meant to defer communicating these phenomena in the idiosyncrasy of her case until our minds could more calmly inquire into the process by which ideas—not apparently derived, as your metaphysical school would derive all ideas, from preconceived experiences—will thus sometimes act like an instinct on the human sufferer for self-preservation, as the bird is directed to the herb or the berry which heals or assuages its ailments. We know how the mesmerists would account for this phenomenon of hygienic introvision and clairvoyance. But here there is no mesmeriser, unless the patient can be supposed to mesmerise herself. Long, however, before mesmerism was heard of, medical history attests examples in which patients who baffled the skill of the ablest physicians have fixed their fancies on some remedy that physicians would call inoperative for good or for harm, and have recovered by the remedies thus singularly self-suggested. And Hippocrates himself, if I construe his meaning rightly, recognises the powers for self-cure which the condition of trance will sometimes bestow on the sufferer, ‘where’ (says the father of our art) ‘the sight being closed to the external, the soul more truthfully perceives the affections of the body.’ In short—I own it—in this instance, the skill of the physician has been a compliant obedience to the instinct called forth in the patient. And the hopes I have hitherto permitted myself to give you were founded on my experience that her own hopes, conceived in trance, had never been fallacious or ex-

aggerated. The simples that I gathered for her yesterday she had described; they are not in our herbal. But as they are sometimes used by the natives, I had the curiosity to analyse their chemical properties shortly after I came to the colony, and they seemed to me as innocent as lime-blossoms. They are rare in this part of Australia, but she told me where I should find them—a remote spot, which she has certainly never visited. Last night, when you saw me disturbed, dejected, it was because, for the first time, the docility with which she had hitherto, in her waking state, obeyed her own injunctions in the state of trance, forsook me. She could not be induced to taste the decoction I had made from the herbs; and if you found me this morning with weaker hopes than before, this is the real cause—viz., that when I visited her at sunrise, she was not in sleep but in trance, and in that trance she told me that she had nothing more to suggest or reveal; that on the complete restoration of her senses, which was at hand, the abnormal faculties vouchsafed to trance would be withdrawn. ‘As for my life,’ she said, quietly, as if unconscious of our temporary joy or woe in the term of its tenure here—‘as for my life, your aid is now idle; my own vision obscure; on my life a dark and cold shadow is resting. I cannot foresee if it will pass away. When I strive to look around, I see but my Allen——’”

“And so,” said I, mastering my emotions, “in bidding me hope you did not rely on your own re-

sources of science, but on the whisper of nature in the brain of your patient?"

"It is so."

We both remained silent some moments, and then, as he disappeared within my house, I murmured—

"And when she strives to look beyond the shadow, she sees only me! Is there some prophet-hint of Nature there also, directing me not to scorn the secret which a wanderer, so suddenly dropt on my solitude, assures me that Nature will sometimes reveal to her seeker? And oh! that dark wanderer—has Nature a marvel more weird than himself?"

CHAPTER LXXVI.

I STRAYED through the forest till noon, in debate with myself, and strove to shape my wild doubts into purpose, before I could nerve and compose myself again to face Margrave alone.

I re-entered the hut. To my surprise, Margrave was not in the room in which I had left him, nor in that which adjoined it. I ascended the stairs to the kind of loft in which I had been accustomed to pursue my studies, but in which I had not set foot since my alarm for Lilian had suspended my labours. There I saw Margrave quietly seated before the manuscript of my *Ambitious Work*, which lay open on the rude table just as I had left it, in the midst of its concluding summary.

“I have taken the licence of former days, you see,” said Margrave, smiling, “and have hit by chance on a passage I can understand without effort. But why such a waste of argument to prove a fact so simple? In man, as in brute, life once lost is lost for ever; and that is why life is so precious to man.”

I took the book from his hand, and flung it aside in wrath. His approval revolted me more with my

own theories than all the argumentative rebukes of Faber.

“And now,” I said, sternly, “the time has come for the explanation you promised. Before I can aid you in any experiment that may serve to prolong your life, I must know how far that life has been a baleful and destroying influence?”

“I have some faint recollection of having saved *your* life from an imminent danger; and if gratitude were the attribute of man, as it is of the dog, I should claim your aid to serve mine as a right. Ask me what you will. You must have seen enough of me to know that I do not affect either the virtues or vices of others. I regard both with so supreme an indifference, that I believe I am vicious or virtuous unawares. I know not if I can explain what seems to have perplexed you, but if I cannot explain I have no intention to lie. Speak—I listen! We have time enough now before us.”

So saying, he reclined back in the chair, stretching out his limbs wearily. All round this spoilt darling of Material Nature the aids and appliances of Intellectual Science!—books and telescopes and crucibles, with the light of day coming through a small circular aperture in the boarded casement, as I had constructed the opening for my experimental observation of the prismatic rays.

While I write, his image is as visible before my remembrance as if before the actual eye—beautiful even in its decay, awful even in its weakness, mysterious as

is Nature herself amidst all the mechanism by which our fancied knowledge attempts to measure her laws and analyse her light.

But at that moment no such subtle reflections delayed my inquisitive eager mind from its immediate purpose—who and what was this creature boasting of a secret through which I might rescue from death the life of her who was my all upon the earth?

I gathered rapidly and succinctly together all that I knew and all that I guessed of Margrave's existence and arts. I commenced from my Vision in that mimic Golgotha of creatures inferior to man, close by the scene of man's most trivial and meaningless pastime. I went on—Derval's murder; the missing contents of the casket; the apparition seen by the maniac assassin guiding him to the horrid deed; the luminous haunting Shadow; the positive charge in the murdered man's memoir connecting Margrave with Louis Grayle, and accusing him of the murder of Haroun; the night in the moonlit pavilion at Derval Court; the baneful influence on Lilian; the struggle between me and himself in the house by the sea-shore;—The strange All that is told in this Strange Story.

But, warming as I spoke, and in a kind of fierce joy to be enabled thus to free my own heart of the doubts that had burdened it, now that I was fairly face to face with the being by whom my reason had been so perplexed and my life so tortured, I was restrained by none of the fears lest my own fancy deceived me, with which in his absence I had striven to reduce to natural

causes the portents of terror and wonder. I stated plainly, directly, the beliefs, the impressions which I had never dared even to myself to own without seeking to explain them away. And coming at last to a close, I said: "Such are the evidences that seem to me to justify abhorrence of the life that you ask me to aid in prolonging. Your own tale of last night but confirms them. And why to me—to me—do you come with wild entreaties to lengthen the life that has blighted my own? How did you even learn the home in which I sought unavailing refuge? How—as your hint to Faber clearly revealed—were you aware that, in yon house, where the sorrow is veiled, where the groan is suppressed, where the foot-tread falls ghost-like, there struggles now between life and death my heart's twin, my world's sunshine? Ah! through my terror for her, is it a demon that tells you how to bribe my abhorrence into submission, and supple my reason into use to your ends?"

Margrave had listened to me throughout with a fixed attention, at times with a bewildered stare, at times with exclamations of surprise, but not of denial. And when I had done, he remained for some moments silent, seemingly stupefied, passing his hand repeatedly over his brow, in the gesture so familiar to him in former days.

At length he said, quietly, without evincing any sign either of resentment or humiliation—

"In much that you tell me I recognise myself: in much I am as lost in amazement as you in wild doubt

or fierce wrath. Of the effect that you say Philip Derval produced on me I have no recollection. Of himself I have only this—that he was my foe, that he came to England intent on schemes to shorten my life or destroy its enjoyments. All my faculties tend to self-preservation; there they converge as rays in a focus; in that focus they illume and—they burn. I willed to destroy my intended destroyer. Did my will enforce itself on the agent to which it was guided? Likely enough. Be it so. Would you blame me for slaying the tiger or serpent—not by the naked hand, but by weapons that arm it? But what could tiger and serpent do more against me than the man who would rob me of life? He had his arts for assault—I had mine for self-defence. He was to me as the tiger that creeps through the jungle, or the serpent uncoiling his folds for the spring. Death to those whose life is destruction to mine, be they serpent, or tiger, or man! Derval perished! Yes! the spot in which the maniac had buried the casket *was* revealed to me—no matter how; the contents of the casket passed into my hands. I coveted that possession because I believed that Derval had learned from Haroun of Aleppo the secret by which the elixir of life is prepared, and I supposed that some stores of the essence would be found in his casket. I was deceived—not a drop! What I there found I knew not how to use or apply, nor did I care to learn. What I sought was not there. You see a luminous shadow of myself; it haunts, it accosts, it compels you. Of this I know

nothing. Was it the emanation of my intense will really producing this spectre of myself? or was it the thing of your own imagination—an imagination which my will impressed and subjugated? I know not. At the hours when my shadow, real or supposed, was with you, my senses would have been locked in sleep. It is true, however, that I intensely desire to learn from races always near to man, but concealed from his everyday vision, the secret that I believed Philip Derval had carried with him to the tomb; and from some cause or another, I cannot now of myself alone, as I could years ago, subject those races to my command—I must, in that, act through or with the mind of another. It is true that I sought to impress upon your waking thoughts the images of the circle, the powers of the wand, which, in your trance or sleep-walking, made you the involuntary agent of my will. I knew by a dream—for by dreams, more or less vivid, are the results of my waking will sometimes divulged to myself—that the spell had been broken, the discovery I sought not effected. All my hopes were then transferred from yourself, the dull votary of science, to the girl whom I charmed to my thralldom through her love for you and through her dreams of a realm which the science of schools never enters. In her, imagination was all pure and all potent; and tell me, O practical reasoner, if reason has ever advanced one step into knowledge except through that imaginative faculty which is strongest in the wisdom of ignorance, and weakest in the ignorance of the wise. Ponder

this, and those marvels that perplex you will cease to be marvellous. I pass on to the riddle that puzzles you most. By Philip Derval's account I am, in truth, Louis Grayle restored to youth by the elixir, and while yet infirm, decrepit, murdered Haroun—a man of a frame as athletic as yours! By accepting this notion you seem to yourself alone to unravel the mysteries you ascribe to my life and my powers. O wise philosopher! O profound logician! you accept that notion, yet hold my belief in the Dervish's tale a chimera! I am Grayle made young by the elixir, and yet the elixir itself is a fable!”

He paused and laughed, but the laugh was no longer even an echo of its former merriment or playfulness—a sinister and terrible laugh, mocking, threatening, malignant.

Again he swept his hand over his brows and resumed :

“ Is it not easier to so accomplished a sage as you to believe that the idlers of Paris have guessed the true solution of that problem—my place on this earth? May I not be the love-son of Louis Grayle? And when Haroun refused the elixir to him, or he found that his frame was too far exhausted for even the elixir to repair organic lesions of structure in the worn frame of old age, may he not have indulged the common illusion of fathers, and soothed his death-pangs with the thought that he should live again in his son? Haroun is found dead on his carpet—rumour said strangled. What proof of the truth of that rumour? Might he

not have passed away in a fit? Will it lessen your perplexity if I state recollections? They are vague—they often perplex myself; but so far from a wish to deceive you, my desire is to relate them so truthfully that you may aid me to reduce them into more definite form.”

His face now became very troubled, the tone of his voice very irresolute: the face and the voice of a man who is either blundering his way through an intricate falsehood, or through obscure reminiscences.

“This Louis Grayle! this Louis Grayle! I remember him well, as one remembers a nightmare. Whenever I look back, before the illness of which I will presently speak, the image of Louis Grayle returns to me. I see myself with him in African wilds, commanding the fierce Abyssinians. I see myself with him in the fair Persian valley—lofty, snow-covered mountains encircling the garden of roses. I see myself with him in the hush of the golden noon, reclined by the spray of cool fountains; now listening to cymbals and lutes—now arguing with greybeards on secrets bequeathed by the Chaldees. With him in moonlit nights, stealing into the sepulchres of mythical kings. I see myself with him in the aisles of dark caverns, surrounded by awful shapes, which have no likeness amongst the creatures of earth. Louis Grayle! Louis Grayle! all my earlier memories go back to Louis Grayle! All my arts and powers, all that I have learned of the languages spoken in Europe, of the sciences taught in her schools, I owe to Louis Grayle. But am I one and the same with him? No—I am but a pale reflection of

his giant intellect. I have not even a reflection of his childlike agonies of sorrow. Louis Grayle ! He stands apart from me, as a rock from the tree that grows out from its chasms. Yes, the gossip was right ; I must be his son."

He leant his face on both hands, rocking himself to and fro. At length, with a sigh, he resumed :

"I remember, too, a long and oppressive illness, attended with racking pains—a dismal journey in a wearisome litter—the light hand of the woman Ayesha, so sad and so stately, smoothing my pillow, or fanning my brows. I remember the evening on which my nurse drew the folds of the litter aside, and said, 'See Aleppo ! and the star of thy birth shining over its walls !'

"I remember a face inexpressibly solemn and mournful. I remember the chill that the calm of its ominous eye sent through my veins—the face of Haroun, the Sage of Aleppo. I remember the vessel of crystal he bore in his hand, and the blessed relief from my pains that a drop from the essence which flashed through the crystal bestowed ! And then—and then—I remember no more till the night on which Ayesha came to my couch and said, 'Rise.'

"And I rose, leaning on her, supported by her. We went through dim narrow streets, faintly lit by wan stars, disturbing the prowling of the dogs that slunk from the look of that woman. We came to a solitary house, small and low, and my nurse said, 'Wait.'

"She opened the door and went in ; I seated my-

self on the threshold. And after a time she came out from the house, and led me, still leaning on her, into a chamber.

“A man lay, as in sleep, on the carpet, and beside him stood another man, whom I recognised as Ayesha’s special attendant—an Indian. ‘Haroun is dead,’ said Ayesha. ‘Search for that which will give thee new life. Thou hast seen, and wilt know it, not I.’

“And I put my hand on the breast of Haroun—for the dead man was he—and drew from it the vessel of crystal.

“Having done so, the frown on his marble brow appalled me. I staggered back and swooned away.

“I came to my senses, recovered and rejoicing, miles afar from the city, the dawn red on its distant walls. Ayesha had tended me ; the elixir had already restored me.

“My first thought, when full consciousness came back to me, rested on Louis Grayle, for he also had been at Aleppo. I was but one of his numerous train. He, too, was enfeebled and suffering ; he had sought the known skill of Haroun for himself as for me ; and this woman loved and had tended him as she had loved and tended me. And my nurse told me that he was dead, and forbade me henceforth to breathe his name.

“We travelled on—she and I, and the Indian, her servant—my strength still renewed by the wondrous elixir. No longer supported by her, what gazelle ever roved through its pasture with a bound more elastic than mine ?

“We came to a town, and my nurse placed before me a mirror. I did not recognise myself. In this town we rested, obscure, till the letter there reached me by which I learned that I was the offspring of love, and enriched by the care of a father recently dead. Is it not clear that Louis Grayle was this father?”

“If so, was the woman, Ayesha, your mother?”

“The letter said that ‘my mother had died in my infancy.’ Nevertheless, the care with which Ayesha had tended me induced a suspicion that made me ask her the very question you put. She wept when I asked her, and said, ‘No, only my nurse. And now I needed a nurse no more.’ The day after I received the letter which announced an inheritance that allowed me to vie with the nobles of Europe, this woman left me, and went back to her tribe.”

“Have you never seen her since?”

Margrave hesitated a moment, and then answered, though with seeming reluctance, “Yes, at Damascus. Not many days after I was borne to that city by the strangers who found me half-dead on their road, I woke one morning to find her by my side. And she said, ‘In joy and in health you did not need me. I am needed now.’”

“Did you then deprive yourself of one so devoted? You have not made this long voyage—from Egypt to Australia—alone; you, to whom wealth gave no excuse for privation?”

“The woman came with me, and some chosen attendants. I engaged to ourselves the vessel we sailed in.”

“Where have you left your companions?”

“By this hour,” answered Margrave, “they are in reach of my summons; and when you and I have achieved the discovery—in the results of which we shall share—I will exact no more from your aid. I trust all that rests for my cure to my nurse and her swarthy attendants. You will aid me now as a matter of course; the physician whose counsel you needed to guide your own skill enjoins you to obey my whim—if whim you still call it; you will obey it, for on that whim rests your own sole hope of happiness;—you, who can love—I love nothing but life. Has my frank narrative solved all the doubts that stood between you and me, in the great meeting-ground of an interest in common?”

“Solved all the doubts! Your wild story but makes some the darker, leaving others untouched: the occult powers of which you boast, and some of which I have witnessed—your very insight into my own household sorrows, into the interest I have, with yourself, in the truth of a faith so repugnant to reason——”

“Pardon me,” interrupted Margrave, with that slight curve of the lip which is half smile and half sneer, “if, in my account of myself, I omitted what I cannot explain and you cannot conceive: let me first ask how many of the commonest actions of the commonest men are purely involuntary and wholly inexplicable? When, for instance, you open your lips and utter a sentence, you have not the faintest idea beforehand what word will follow another; when you move a

muscle, can you tell me the thought that prompts to the movement? And, wholly unable thus to account for your own simple sympathies between impulse and act, do you believe that there exists a man upon earth who can read all the riddles in the heart and brain of another? Is it not true that not one drop of water, one atom of matter, ever really touches another? Between each and each there is always a space, however infinitesimally small. How, then, could the world go on if every man asked another to make his whole history and being as lucid as daylight before he would buy and sell with him? All interchange and alliance rest but on this—an interest in common. You and I have established that interest: all else, all you ask more, is superfluous. Could I answer each doubt you would raise, still, whether the answer should please or revolt you, your reason would come back to the same starting-point—viz., In one definite proposal have we two an interest in common?"

And again Margrave laughed, not in mirth, but in mockery. The laugh and the words that preceded it were not the laugh and the words of the young. Could it be possible that Louis Grayle had indeed revived to false youth in the person of Margrave, such might have been his laugh and such his words. The whole mind of Margrave seemed to have undergone change since I last saw him; more rich in idea, more crafty even in candour, more powerful, more concentrated. As we see in our ordinary experience, that some infirmity, threatening dissolution, brings forth more vividly

the reminiscences of early years, when impressions were vigorously stamped, so I might have thought, that as Margrave neared the tomb, the memories he had retained from his former existence, in a being more amply endowed, more formidably potent, struggled back to the brain; and the mind that had lived in Louis Grayle moved the lips of the dying Margrave.

“For the powers and the arts that it equally puzzles your reason to assign or deny to me,” resumed my terrible guest, “I will say briefly but this: they come from faculties stored within myself, and doubtless conduce to my self-preservation—faculties more or less, perhaps (so Van Helmont asserts), given to all men, though dormant in most;—vivid and active in me because in me self-preservation has been and yet is the strong master-passion, or instinct; and because I have been taught how to use and direct such faculties by disciplined teachers—some by Louis Grayle, the enchanter; some by my nurse, the singer of charmed songs. But in much that I will to have done, I know no more than yourself how the agency acts. Enough for me to will what I wished, and sink calmly into slumber sure that the will would work somehow its way. But when I have willed to know what, when known, should shape my own courses, I could see, without aid from your pitiful telescopes, all objects howsoever afar. What wonder in that? Have you no learned puzzle-brain metaphysicians, who tell you that space is but an idea, all this palpable universe an idea in the mind, and no more! Why am I an enigma

as dark as the Sibyls, and your metaphysicians as plain as a hornbook?" Again the sardonic laugh. "Enough: let what I have said obscure or enlighten your guesses, we come back to the same link of union, which binds man to man, bids states arise from the desert, and foemen embrace as brothers. I need you and you need me; without your aid my life is doomed; without my secret the breath will have gone from the lips of your Lilian before the sun of to-morrow is red on yon hill-tops."

"Fiend or juggler," I cried in rage, "you shall not so enslave and enthrall me by this mystic farrago and jargon. Make your fantastic experiment on yourself if you will; trust to your arts and your powers. My Lilian's life shall not hang on your fiat. I trust it—to——"

"To what—to man's skill? Hear what the sage of the college shall tell you, before I ask you again for your aid. Do you trust to God's saving mercy? Ah! of course you believe in a God? Who, except a philosopher, can reason a Maker away? But that the Maker will alter His courses to hear you; that, whether or not you trust in Him, or in your doctor, it will change by a hairbreadth the thing that must be—do you believe *this*, Allen Fenwick?"

And there sat this reader of hearts! a boy in his aspect, mocking me and the greybeards of schools.

I could listen no more; I turned to the door and fled down the stairs, and heard, as I fled, a low chant: feeble and faint, it was still the old barbaric chant, by which the serpent is drawn from its hole by the charmer.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

To those of my readers who may seek with Julius Faber to explore, through intelligible causes, solutions of the marvels I narrate, Margrave's confession may serve to explain away much that my own superstitious beliefs had obscured. To them Margrave is evidently the son of Louis Grayle. The elixir of life is reduced to some simple restorative, owing much of its effect to the faith of a credulous patient : youth is so soon restored to its joy in the sun, with or without an elixir. To them Margrave's arts of enchantment are reduced to those idiosyncrasies of temperament on which the disciples of Mesmer build up their theories ; exaggerated, in much, by my own superstitions ; aided, in part, by such natural, purely physical magic as, explored by the ancient priestcrafts, is despised by the modern philosophies, and only remains occult because Science delights no more in the slides of the lantern which fascinated her childhood with simulated phantoms. To them Margrave is, perhaps, an enthusiast, but, because an enthusiast, not less an impostor. "*L'Homme se pique*," says Charron. Man cogs the dice for himself ere he rattles the box for his dupes. Was there ever

successful impostor who did not commence by a fraud on his own understanding? Cradled in Orient Fable-land, what though Margrave believes in its legends—in a wand, an elixir—in sorcerers or Afrites? That belief in itself makes him keen to detect, and skilful to profit by, the latent but kindred credulities of others. In all illustrations of Duper and Duped through the records of superstition—from the guile of a Cromwell, a Mahomet, down to the cheats of a gipsy—professional visionaries are amongst the astutest observers. The knowledge that Margrave had gained of my abode, of my affliction, or of the innermost thoughts in my mind, it surely demanded no preternatural aids to acquire. An Old Bailey attorney could have got at the one, and any quick student of human hearts have readily mastered the other. In fine, Margrave, thus rationally criticised, is no other prodigy (save in degree and concurrence of attributes simple, though not very common) than may be found in each alley that harbours a fortune-teller who has just faith enough in the stars or the cards to bubble himself while he swindles his victims: earnest, indeed, in the self-conviction that he is really a seer, but reading the looks of his listeners, divining the thoughts that induce them to listen, and acquiring by practice a startling ability to judge what the listeners will deem it most seer-like to read in the cards or divine from the stars.

I leave this interpretation unassailed. It is that which is the most probable, it is clearly that which, in a case not my own, I should have accepted; and yet I

revolved and dismissed it. The moment we deal with things beyond our comprehension, and in which our own senses are appealed to and baffled, we revolt from the Probable, as it seems to the senses of those who have not experienced what we have. And the same principle of Wonder that led our philosophy up from inert ignorance into restless knowledge, now winding back into Shadow-land, reverses its rule by the way, and at last leaves us lost in the maze, our knowledge inert, and our ignorance restless.

And putting aside all other reasons for hesitating to believe that Margrave was the son of Louis Grayle—reasons which his own narrative might suggest—was it not strange that Sir Philip Derval, who had instituted inquiries so minute, and reported them in his memoir with so faithful a care, should not have discovered that a youth, attended by the same woman who had attended Grayle, had disappeared from the town on the same night as Grayle himself disappeared? But Derval had related truthfully, according to Margrave's account, the flight of Ayesha and her Indian servant, yet not alluded to the flight, not even to the existence, of the boy, who must have been of no mean importance in the suite of Louis Grayle, if he were, indeed, the son whom Grayle had made his constant companion, and constituted his principal heir.

Not many minutes did I give myself up to the cloud of reflections through which no sunbeam of light forced its way. One thought overmastered all; Margrave had threatened death to my Lilian, and warned me of

what I should learn from the lips of Faber, "the sage of the college." I stood, shuddering at the door of my home ; I did not dare to enter.

"Allen," said a voice, in which my ear detected an unwonted tremulous faltering, "be firm—be calm. I keep my promise. The hour is come in which you may again see the Lilian of old—mind to mind, soul to soul."

Faber's hand took mine, and led me into the house.

"You do, then, fear that this interview will be too much for her strength?" said I, whisperingly.

"I cannot say; but she demands the interview, and I dare not refuse it."

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

I LEFT Faber on the stairs, and paused at the door of Lilian's room. The door opened suddenly, noiselessly, and her mother came out with one hand before her face, and the other locked in Amy's, who was leading her as a child leads the blind. Mrs Ashleigh looked up, as I touched her, with a vacant, dreary stare. She was not weeping, as was her womanly wont in every pettier grief, but Amy was. No word was exchanged between us. I entered, and closed the door; my eyes turned mechanically to the corner in which was placed the small virgin bed, with its curtains white as a shroud. Lilian was not there. I looked around, and saw her half reclined on a couch near the window. She was dressed, and with care. Was not that her bridal robe?

"Allen—Allen," she murmured. "Again, again my Allen—again, again your Lilian!" And, striving in vain to rise, she stretched out her arms in the yearning of reunited love. And as I knelt beside her, those arms closed round me, for the first time in the frank, chaste, holy tenderness of a wife's embrace.

"Ah!" she said, in her low voice (her voice, like

Cordelia's, was ever low), "all has come back to me—all that I owe to your protecting, noble, trustful, guardian love !"

"Hush! hush! the gratitude rests with me—it is so sweet to love, to trust, to guard! my own, my beautiful—still my beautiful! Suffering has not dimmed the light of those dear eyes to me! Put your lips to my ear. Whisper but these words: 'I love you, and for your sake I wish to live!'"

"For your sake, I pray—with my whole weak, human heart—I pray to live! Listen. Some day hereafter, if I am spared, under the purple blossoms of yonder waving trees I shall tell you all, as I see it now; all that darkened or shone on me in my long dream, and before the dream closed around me, like a night in which cloud and star chase each other! Some day hereafter, some quiet, sunlit, happy, happy day. But now, all I would say is this: Before that dreadful morning——" Here she paused, shuddered, and passionately burst forth—"Allen, Allen! you did not believe that slanderous letter! God bless you! God bless you! Great-hearted, high-souled—God bless you, my darling! my husband! And He will! Pray to Him humbly as I do, and he will bless you." She stooped and kissed away my tears—then she resumed, feebly, meekly, sorrowfully:

"Before that morning I was not worthy of such a heart, such a love as yours. No, no; hear me. Not that a thought of love for another ever crossed me! Never, while conscious and reasoning, was I untrue to

you—even in fancy ! But I was a child—wayward as the child who pines for what earth cannot give, and covets the moon for a toy. Heaven had been so kind to my lot on earth, and yet with my lot on earth I was secretly discontented. When I felt that you loved me, and my heart told me that I loved again, I said to myself, ‘Now the void that my soul finds on earth will be filled.’ I longed for your coming, and yet when you went I murmured, ‘But is this the ideal of which I dreamed ?’ I asked for an impossible sympathy. Sympathy with what ? Nay, smile on me, dearest !—sympathy with what ? I could not have said. Ah ! Allen, then, then I was not worthy of you : Infant that I was, I asked you to understand me : now I know that I am a woman, and my task is to study you ! Do I make myself clear ? Do you forgive me ? I was not untrue to you ; I was untrue to my own duties in life. I believed, in my vain conceit, that a mortal’s dim vision of heaven raised me above the earth ; I did not perceive the truth that earth is a part of the same universe as heaven ! Now perhaps, in the awful affliction that darkened my reason, my soul has been made more clear. As if to chastise but to teach me, my soul has been permitted to indulge its own presumptuous desire ; it has wandered forth from the trammels of mortal duties and destinies ; it comes back, alarmed by the dangers of its own rash and presumptuous escape from the tasks which it should desire upon earth to perform. Allen, Allen, I am less unworthy of you now ! Perhaps in my dark-

ness one rapid glimpse of the true world of spirit has been vouchsafed to me. If so, how unlike to the visions my childhood indulged as divine ! Now, while I know still more deeply that there is a world for the angels, I know, also, that the mortal must pass through probation in the world of mortals. Oh ! may I pass through it with you :—grieving in your griefs, rejoicing in your joys !”

Here language failed her. Again the dear arms embraced me, and the dear face, eloquent with love, hid itself on my human breast.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THAT interview is over ! Again I am banished from Lilian's room ; the agitation, the joy of that meeting has overstrained her enfeebled nerves. Convulsive tremblings of the whole frame, accompanied with vehement sobs, succeeded our brief interchange of sweet and bitter thoughts. Faber, in tearing me from her side, imperiously and sternly warned me that the sole chance yet left of preserving her life was in the merciful suspense of the emotions that my presence excited. He and Amy resumed their place in her chamber. Even her mother shared my sentence of banishment. So Mrs Ashleigh and I sat facing each other in the room below ; over me a leaden stupor had fallen, and I heard, as a voice from afar or in a dream, the mother's murmured wailings :—

“ She will die—she will die ! Her eyes have the same heavenly look as my Gilbert's on the day on which his closed for ever. Her very words are his last words —‘ Forgive me all my faults to you.’ She will die—she will die ! ”

Hours thus passed away. At length Faber entered the room ; he spoke first to Mrs Ashleigh—meaningless

soothings, familiar to the lips of all who pass from the chamber of the dying to the presence of mourners, and know that it is a falsehood to say "hope," and a mockery, as yet, to say, "endure."

But he led her away to her own room docile as a wearied child led to sleep, stayed with her some time, and then returned to me, pressing me to his breast father-like.

"No hope—no hope!" said I, recoiling from his embrace. "You are silent. Speak! speak! Let me know the worst."

"I have a hope, yet I scarcely dare to bid you share it; for it grows rather out of my heart as man, than my experience as physician. I cannot think that her soul would be now so reconciled to earth, so fondly, so earnestly cling to this mortal life, if it were about to be summoned away. You know how commonly even the sufferers who have dreaded death the most become calmly resigned to its coming, when death visibly reveals itself out from the shadows in which its shape has been guessed and not seen. As it is a bad sign for life when the patient has lost all will to live on, so there is hope while the patient, yet young and with no perceptible breach in the great centres of life (however violently their forts may be stormed), has still intense faith in recovery, perhaps drawn (who can say?) from the whispers conveyed from above to the soul.

"I cannot bring myself to think that all the uses for which a reason, always so lovely even in its errors,

has been restored, are yet fulfilled. It seems to me as if your union, as yet so imperfect, has still for its end that holy life on earth by which two mortal beings strengthen each other for a sphere of existence to which this is the spiritual ladder. Through yourself I have hope yet for her. Gifted with powers that rank you high in the manifold orders of man ; thoughtful, laborious, and brave ; with a heart that makes intellect vibrate to every fine touch of humanity ; in error itself, conscientious ; in delusion, still eager for truth ; in anger, forgiving ; in wrong, seeking how to repair ; and, best of all, strong in a love which the mean would have shrunk to defend from the fangs of the slanderer—a love, raising passion itself out of the realm of the senses, made sublime by the sorrows that tried its devotion ;—with all these noble proofs in yourself, of a being not meant to end here, your life has stopped short in its uses, your mind itself has been drifted, a bark without rudder or pilot, over seas without shore, under skies without stars. And wherefore ? Because the Mind you so haughtily vaunted has refused its companion and teacher in Soul.

“ And therefore, through you, I hope that she will be spared yet to live on ;—she, in whom soul has been led dimly astray, by unheeding the checks and the definite goals which the mind is ordained to prescribe to its wanderings while here ; the mind taking thoughts from the actual and visible world, and the soul but vague glimpses and hints from the instinct of its ultimate heritage. Each of you two seems to me as

yet incomplete, and your destinies yet uncompleted. Through the bonds of the heart, through the trials of time, ye have both to consummate your marriage. I do not—believe me—I do not say this in the fanciful wisdom of allegory and type, save that, wherever deeply examined, allegory and type run through all the most commonplace phases of outward and material life. I hope, then, that she may yet be spared to you ; hope it, not from my skill as physician, but my inward belief as a Christian. To perfect your own being and end, *ye will need one another!*”

I started—the very words that Lilian had heard in her vision !

“ But,” resumed Faber, “ how can I presume to trace the numberless links of effects up to the First Cause, far off—oh ! far off—out of the scope of my reason. I leave that to philosophers, who would laugh my meek hope to scorn. Possibly, probably, where I, whose calling has been but to save flesh from the worm, deem that the life of your Lilian is needed yet, to develop and train your own convictions of soul, Heaven in its wisdom may see that her death would instruct you far more than her life. I have said : Be prepared for either ; wisdom through joy, or wisdom through grief. Enough that, looking only through the mechanism by which this moral world is impelled and improved, you know that cruelty is impossible to wisdom. Even a man, or man’s law, is never wise but when merciful. But mercy has general conditions ; and that which is mercy to the myriads may seem hard to the

one; and that which seems hard to the one in the pang of a moment may be mercy when viewed by the eye that looks on through eternity."

And from all this discourse—of which I now, at calm distance of time, recall every word—my human, loving heart bore away for the moment but this sentence, "Ye will need one another;" so that I cried out, "Life, life, life! Is there no hope for her life? Have you no hope as physician? I am physician too; I will see her. I will judge. I will not be banished from my post."

"Judge, then, as physician, and let the responsibility rest with you. At this moment, all convulsion, all struggle has ceased—the frame is at rest. Look on her, and perhaps only the physician's eye could distinguish her state from death. It is not sleep, it is not trance, it is not the dooming coma from which there is no awaking. Shall I call it by the name received in our schools? Is it the catalepsy in which life is suspended, but consciousness acute? She is motionless, rigid; it is but with a strain of my own sense that I know that the breath still breathes, and the heart still beats. But I am convinced that though she can neither speak, nor stir, nor give sign, she is fully, sensitively conscious of all that passes around her. She is like those who have seen the very coffin carried into their chamber, and been unable to cry out, 'Do not bury me alive!' Judge then for yourself, with this intense consciousness and this impotence to evince it, what might be the effect of your presence—

first an agony of despair, and then the complete extinction of life !”

“I have known but one such case—a mother whose heart was wrapped up in a suffering infant. She had lain for two days and two nights, still, as if in her shroud. All, save myself, said, ‘Life is gone.’ I said, ‘Life still is there.’ They brought in the infant, to try what effect its presence would produce ; then her lips moved, and the hands crossed upon her bosom trembled.”

“And the result?” exclaimed Faber, eagerly. “If the result of your experience sanction your presence, come : the sight of the babe rekindled life ?”

“No ; extinguished its last spark ! I will not enter Lilian’s room. I will go away—away from the house itself. That acute consciousness ! I know it well ! She may even hear me move in the room below, hear me speak at this moment. Go back to her, go back ! But if hers be the state which I have known in another, which may be yet more familiar to persons of far ampler experience than mine, there is no immediate danger of death. The state will last through to-day, through to-night, perhaps for days to come. Is it so ?”

“I believe that for at least twelve hours there will be no change in her state. I believe also that if she recover from it, calm and refreshed, as from a sleep, the danger of death will have passed away.”

“And for twelve hours my presence would be hurtful ?”

“Rather say fatal, if my diagnosis be right.”

I wrung my friend’s hand, and we parted.

Oh ! to lose her now ! now that her love and her reason had both returned, each more vivid than before ! Futile, indeed, might be Margrave’s boasted secret ; but at least in that secret was hope. In recognised science I saw only despair.

And, at that thought, all dread of this mysterious visitor vanished—all anxiety to question more of his attributes or his history. His life itself became to me dear and precious. What if it should fail me in the steps of the process, whatever that was, by which the life of my Lilian might be saved !

The shades of evening were now closing in. I remembered that I had left Margrave without even food for many hours. I stole round to the back of the house, filled a basket with aliments more generous than those of the former day, extracted fresh drugs from my stores, and, thus laden, hurried back to the hut. I found Margrave in the room below, seated on his mysterious coffer, leaning his face on his hand. When I entered, he looked up, and said—

“You have neglected me. My strength is waning. Give me more of the cordial, for we have work before us to-night, and I need support.”

He took for granted my assent to his wild experiment ; and he was right.

I administered the cordial. I placed food before him, and this time he did not eat with repugnance. I poured out wine, and he drank it sparingly, but with

ready compliance, saying, "In perfect health, I looked upon wine as poison; now it is like a foretaste of the glorious elixir."

After he had thus recruited himself, he seemed to acquire an energy that startlingly contrasted his languor the day before; the effort of breathing was scarcely perceptible; the colour came back to his cheeks; his bended frame rose elastic and erect.

"If I understood you rightly," said I, "the experiment you ask me to aid can be accomplished in a single night?"

"In a single night—this night."

"Command me. Why not begin at once? What apparatus or chemical agencies do you need?"

"Ah!" said Margrave. "Formerly, how I was misled! Formerly, how my conjectures blundered! I thought, when I asked you to give a month to the experiment I wish to make, that I should need the subtlest skill of the chemist. I then believed, with Van Helmont, that the principle of life is a gas, and that the secret was but in the mode by which the gas might be rightly administered. But now, all that I need is contained in this coffer, save one very simple material—fuel sufficient for a steady fire for six hours. I see even that is at hand, piled up in your outhouse. And now for the substance itself—to that you must guide me."

"Explain."

"Near this very spot is there not gold—in mines yet undiscovered?—and gold of the purest metal?"

"There is. What then? Do you, with the alchemists, blend in one discovery—gold and life?"

"No. But it is only where the chemistry of earth or of man produces gold, that the substance from which the great pabulum of life is extracted by ferment can be found. Possibly, in the attempts at that transmutation of metals, which I think your own great chemist, Sir Humphry Davy, allowed might be possible, but held not to be worth the cost of the process—possibly, in those attempts, some scanty grains of this substance were found by the alchemists, in the crucible, with grains of the metal as niggardly yielded by pitiful mimicry of Nature's stupendous laboratory; and from such grains enough of the essence might, perhaps, have been drawn forth, to add a few years of existence to some feeble greybeard,—granting, what rests on no proofs, that some of the alchemists reached an age rarely given to man. But it is not in the miserly crucible, it is in the matrix of Nature herself, that we must seek in prolific abundance Nature's grand principle—life. As the loadstone is rife with the magnetic virtue, as amber contains the electric, so in this substance, to which we yet want a name, is found the bright life-giving fluid. In the old gold-mines of Asia and Europe the substance exists, but can rarely be met with. The soil for its nutriment may there be well-nigh exhausted. It is here, where Nature herself is all vital with youth, that the nutriment of youth must be sought. Near this spot is gold—guide me to it."

"You cannot come with me. The place which I

know as auriferous is some miles distant—the way rugged. You cannot walk to it. It is true I have horses, but——”

“Do you think I have come this distance, and not foreseen and forestalled all that I want for my object? Trouble yourself not with conjectures how I can arrive at the place. I have provided the means to arrive at and leave it. My litter and its bearers are in reach of my call. Give me your arm to the rising ground, fifty yards from your door.”

I obeyed mechanically, stifling all surprise. I had made my resolve, and admitted no thought that could shake it.

When we reached the summit of the grassy hillock, which sloped from the road that lead to the seaport, Margrave, after pausing to recover breath, lifted up his voice in a key, not loud, but shrill, and slow, and prolonged, half cry and half chant, like the night-hawk's. Through that air—so limpid and still, bringing near far objects, far sounds—the voice pierced its way, artfully pausing, till wave after wave of the atmosphere bore and transmitted it on.

In a few minutes the call seemed re-echoed, so exactly, so cheerily, that for the moment I thought that the note was the mimicry of the shy mocking Lyre-Bird, which mimics so merrily all that it hears in its coverts, from the whirr of the locust to the howl of the wild dog.

“What king,” said the mystical charmer, and as he spoke he carelessly rested his hand on my shoulder,

so that I trembled to feel that this dread son of Nature, Godless and soulless, who had been—and, my heart whispered, who still could be—my bane and mind-darkener, leant upon me for support, as the spoilt younger-born on his brother—"what king," said this cynical mocker, with his beautiful boyish face—"what king in your civilised Europe has the sway of a chief of the East? What link is so strong between mortal and mortal, as that between lord and slave? I transport you poor fools from the land of their birth; they preserve here their old habits—obedience and awe. They would wait till they starved in the solitude—wait to hearken and answer my call. And I, who thus rule them, or charm them—I use and despise them. They know that, and yet serve me! Between you and me, my philosopher, there is but one thing worth living for—life for one's self."

Is it age, is it youth, that thus shocks all my sense, in my solemn completeness of man? Perhaps, in great capitals, young men of pleasure will answer, "It is youth; and we think what he says!" Young friends, I do not believe you.

CHAPTER LXXX.

ALONG the grass-track I saw now, under the moon, just risen, a strange procession—never seen before in Australian pastures. It moved on, noiselessly but quickly. We descended the hillock, and met it on the way : a sable litter, borne by four men, in unfamiliar Eastern garments ; two other swarthy servitors, more bravely dressed, with yataghans and silver-hilted pistols in their belts, preceding this sombre equipage. Perhaps Margrave divined the disdainful thought that passed through my mind, vaguely and half-consciously ; for he said, with the hollow, bitter laugh that had replaced the lively peal of his once melodious mirth, “A little leisure and a little gold, and your raw colonists, too, will have the tastes of a pacha.”

I made no answer. I had ceased to care who and what was my tempter. To me his whole being was resolved into one problem : Had he a secret by which Death could be turned from Lilian ?

But now, as the litter halted, from the long dark shadow which it cast upon the turf, the figure of a woman emerged and stood before us. The outlines of her shape were lost in the loose folds of a black mantle,

and the features of her face were hidden by a black veil, except only the dark-bright, solemn eyes. Her stature was lofty, her bearing majestic, whether in movement or repose.

Margrave accosted her in some language unknown to me. She replied in what seemed to my ear the same tongue. The tones of her voice were sweet, but inexpressibly mournful. The words that they uttered appeared intended to warn, or deprecate, or dissuade; for they called to Margrave's brow a lowering frown, and drew from his lips a burst of unmistakable anger. The woman rejoined, in the same melancholy music of voice. And Margrave then, leaning his arm upon her shoulder as he had leant it on mine, drew her away from the group into a neighbouring copse of the flowering eucalypti—mystic trees, never changing the hues of their pale-green leaves, ever shifting the tints of their ash-grey, shedding bark. For some moments I gazed on the two human forms, dimly seen by the glinting moonlight through the gaps in the foliage. Then, turning away my eyes, I saw, standing close at my side, a man whom I had not noticed before. His footstep, as it stole to me, had fallen on the sward without sound. His dress, though Oriental, differed from that of his companions, both in shape and colour; fitting close to the breast, leaving the arms bare to the elbow, and of an uniform ghastly white, as are the cerements of the grave. His visage was even darker than those of the Syrians or Arabs behind him, and his features were those of a bird of

prey—the beak of the eagle, but the eye of the vulture. His cheeks were hollow—the arms, crossed on his breast, were long and fleshless. Yet in that skeleton form there was a something which conveyed the idea of a serpent's suppleness and strength; and as the hungry, watchful eyes met my own startled gaze, I recoiled impulsively, with that inward warning of danger which is conveyed to man, as to inferior animals, in the very aspect of the creatures that sting or devour. At my movement the man inclined his head in the submissive Eastern salutation, and spoke in his foreign tongue, softly, humbly, fawningly, to judge by his tone and his gesture.

I moved yet farther away from him with loathing, and now the human thought flashed upon me: was I, in truth, exposed to no danger in trusting myself to the mercy of the weird and remorseless master of those hirelings from the East:—seven men in number, two at least of them formidably armed, and docile as bloodhounds to the hunter, who has only to show them their prey? But fear of man like myself is not my weakness; where fear found its way to my heart, it was through the doubts or the fancies in which man like myself disappeared in the attributes, dark and unknown, which we give to a fiend or a spectre. And, perhaps, if I could have paused to analyse my own sensations, the very presence of this escort—creatures of flesh and blood—lessened the dread of my incomprehensible tempter. Rather, a hundred times, front and defy those seven Eastern slaves—I,

haughty son of the Anglo-Saxon who conquers all races because he fears no odds—than have seen again on the walls of my threshold, the luminous, bodiless Shadow! Besides; Lilian—Lilian! for one chance of saving her life, however wild and chimerical that chance might be, I would have shrunk not a foot from the march of an army.

Thus reassured and thus resolved, I advanced, with a smile of disdain, to meet Margrave and his veiled companion, as they now came from the moonlit copse.

“Well,” I said to him, with an irony that unconsciously mimicked his own, “have you taken advice with your nurse? I assume that the dark form by your side is that of Ayesha!”

The woman looked at me from her sable veil, with her steadfast, solemn eyes, and said, in English, though with a foreign accent: “The nurse born in Asia is but wise through her love; the pale son of Europe is wise through his art. The nurse says, ‘Forbear!’ Do you say, ‘Adventure’?”

“Peace!” exclaimed Margrave, stamping his foot on the ground. “I take no counsel from either; it is for me to resolve, for you to obey, and for him to aid. Night is come, and we waste it; move on.”

The woman made no reply, nor did I. He took my arm and walked back to the hut. The barbaric escort followed. When we reached the door of the building, Margrave said a few words to the woman and to the litter-bearers. They entered the hut with us. Margrave pointed out to the woman his coffer—to the

men the fuel stowed in the outhouse. Both were borne away and placed within the litter. Meanwhile I took from the table, on which it was carelessly thrown, the light hatchet that I habitually carried with me in my rambles.

“Do you think that you need that idle weapon?” said Margrave. “Do you fear the good faith of my swarthy attendants?”

“Nay, take the hatchet yourself; its use is to sever the gold from the quartz in which we may find it imbedded, or to clear, as this shovel, which will also be needed, from the slight soil above it, the ore that the mine in the mountain flings forth, as the sea casts its waifs on the sands.”

“Give me your hand, fellow-labourer!” said Margrave, joyfully. “Ah, there is no faltering terror in this pulse! I was not mistaken in the Man. What rests, but the Place and the Hour?—I shall live—I shall live!”

CHAPTER LXXXI.

MARGRAVE now entered the litter, and the Veiled Woman drew the black curtains round him. I walked on, as the guide, some yards in advance. The air was still, heavy, and parched with the breath of the Australasian sirocco.

We passed through the meadow-lands, studded with slumbering flocks; we followed the branch of the creek, which was linked to its source in the mountains by many a trickling waterfall; we threaded the gloom of stunted, misshapen trees, gnarled with the stringy bark which makes one of the signs of the strata that nourish gold; and at length the moon, now in all her pomp of light, mid-heaven amongst her subject stars, gleamed through the fissures of the cave, on whose floor lay the relics of antediluvian races, and rested in one flood of silvery splendour upon the hollows of the extinct volcano, with tufts of dank herbage, and wide spaces of paler sward, covering the gold below—Gold, the dumb symbol of organised Matter's great mystery, storing in itself, according as Mind, the informer of Matter, can distinguish its uses, evil and good, bane and blessing.

Hitherto the Veiled Woman had remained in the rear, with the white-robed skeleton-like image, that had crept to my side unawares with its noiseless step. Thus, in each winding turn of the difficult path at which the convoy following behind me came into sight, I had seen, first, the two gaily-dressed armed men, next the black bier-like litter, and last the Black-veiled Woman and the White-robed Skeleton.

But now, as I halted on the table-land, backed by the mountain and fronting the valley, the woman left her companion, passed by the litter and the armed men, and paused by my side, at the mouth of the moonlit cavern.

There for a moment she stood, silent, the procession below mounting upward laboriously and slow; then she turned to me, and her veil was withdrawn.

The face on which I gazed was wondrously beautiful and severely awful. There was neither youth nor age, but beauty, mature and majestic as that of a marble Demeter.

“Do you believe in that which you seek?” she asked, in her foreign, melodious, melancholy accents.

“I have no belief,” was my answer. “True science has none. True science questions all things, takes nothing upon credit. It knows but three states of the mind—Denial, Conviction, and that vast interval between the two, which is not belief, but suspense of judgment.”

The woman let fall her veil, moved from me, and seated herself on a crag above that cleft between moun-

tain and creek, to which, when I had first discovered the gold that the land nourished, the rain from the clouds had given the rushing life of the cataract, but which now, in the drought and the hush of the skies, was but a dead pile of stones.

The litter now ascended the height ; its bearers halted ; a lean hand tore the curtains aside, and Margrave descended, leaning, this time, not on the Black-veiled Woman, but on the White-robed Skeleton.

There, as he stood, the moon shone full on his wasted form ; on his face, resolute, cheerful, and proud, despite its hollowed outlines and sicklied hues. He raised his head, spoke in the language unknown to me, and the armed men and the litter-bearers grouped round him, bending low, their eyes fixed on the ground. The Veiled Woman rose slowly and came to his side, motioning away, with a mute sign, the ghastly form on which he leant, and passing round him silently, instead, her own sustaining arm. Margrave spoke again a few sentences, of which I could not even guess the meaning. When he had concluded, the armed men and the litter-bearers came nearer to his feet, knelt down, and kissed his hand. They then rose, and took from the bier-like vehicle the coffer and the fuel. This done they lifted again the litter, and again, preceded by the armed men, the procession descended down the sloping hillside, down into the valley below.

Margrave now whispered, for some moments, into the ear of the hideous creature who had made way

for the Veiled Woman. The grim skeleton bowed his head submissively, and strode noiselessly away through the long grasses; the slender stems, trampled under his stealthy feet, relifting themselves, as after a passing wind. And thus he, too, sank out of sight down into the valley below. On the table-land of the hill remained only we three—Margrave, myself, and the Veiled Woman.

She had reseated herself apart, on the grey crag above the dried torrent. He stood at the entrance of the cavern, round the sides of which clustered parasitical plants, with flowers of all colours, some amongst them opening their petals and exhaling their fragrance only in the hours of night; so that, as his form filled up the jaws of the dull arch, obscuring the moonbeam that strove to pierce the shadows that slept within, it stood now—wan and blighted—as I had seen it first, radiant and joyous, literally “framed in blooms.”

CHAPTER LXXXII.

“So,” said Margrave, turning to me, “under the soil that spreads around us, lies the gold which to you and to me is at this moment of no value, except as a guide to its twin-born—the regenerator of life !”

“You have not yet described to me the nature of the substance which we are to explore, nor of the process by which the virtues you impute to it are to be extracted.”

“Let us first find the gold, and instead of describing the life-amber, so let me call it, I will point it out to your own eyes. As to the process, your share in it is so simple, that you will ask me why I seek aid from a chemist. The life-amber, when found, has but to be subjected to heat and fermentation for six hours ; it will be placed in a small caldron which that coffer contains, over the fire which that fuel will feed. To give effect to the process, certain alkalies and other ingredients are required. But these are prepared, and mine is the task to commingle them. From your science as chemist I need and ask not. In you I have sought only the aid of a man.”

“If that be so, why, indeed, seek me at all ? Why

not confide in those swarthy attendants, who doubtless are slaves to your orders ? ”

“ Confide in slaves ! when the first task enjoined to them would be to discover, and refrain from purloining, gold ! Seven such unscrupulous knaves, or even one such, and I, thus defenceless and feeble ! Such is not the work that wise masters confide to fierce slaves. But that is the least of the reasons which exclude them from my choice, and fix my choice of assistance on you. Do you forget what I told you of the danger which the Dervish declared no bribe I could offer could tempt him a second time to brave ? ”

“ I remember now ; those words had passed away from my mind.”

“ And because they had passed away from your mind, I chose you for my comrade. I need a man by whom danger is scorned.”

“ But in the process of which you tell me I see no possible danger, unless the ingredients you mix in your caldron have poisonous fumes.”

“ It is not that. The ingredients I use are not poisons.”

“ What other danger, except you dread your own Eastern slaves ? But if so, why lead them to these solitudes ?—and if so, why not bid me be armed ? ”

“ The Eastern slaves, fulfilling my commands, wait for my summons, where their eyes cannot see what we do. The danger is of a kind in which the boldest son of the East would be more craven, perhaps, than the daintiest Sybarite of Europe, who would shrink from

a panther and laugh at a ghost. In the creed of the Dervish, and of all who adventure into that realm of nature which is closed to philosophy and open to magic, there are races in the magnitude of space unseen as animalcules in the world of a drop. For the tribes of the drop, science has its microscope. Of the hosts of yon azure Infinite magic gains sight, and through them gains command over fluid conductors that link all the parts of creation. Of these races, some are wholly indifferent to man, some benign to him, and some dreadfully hostile. In all the regular and prescribed conditions of mortal being, this magic realm seems as blank and tenantless as yon vacant air. But when a seeker of powers beyond the rude functions by which man plies the clockwork, that measures his hours and stops when its chain reaches the end of its coil, strives to pass over those boundaries at which philosophy says, 'Knowledge ends,' then he is like all other travellers in regions unknown; he must propitiate or brave the tribes that are hostile—must depend for his life on the tribes that are friendly. Though your science discredits the alchemist's dogmas, your learning informs you that all alchemists were not ignorant impostors; yet those whose discoveries prove them to have been the nearest allies to your practical knowledge, ever hint in their mystical works at the reality of that realm which is open to magic—ever hint that some means less familiar than furnace and bellows are essential to him who explores the elixir of life. He who once quaffs that elixir, obtains in his very veins

the bright fluid by which he transmits the force of his will to agencies dormant in nature, to giants unseen in the space. And here, as he passes the boundary which divides his allotted and normal mortality from the regions and races that magic alone can explore, so here he breaks down the safeguard between himself and the tribes that are hostile. Is it not ever thus between man and man? Let a race the most gentle and timid and civilised dwell on one side a river or mountain, and another have home in the region beyond, each, if it pass not the intervening barrier, may with each live in peace. But if ambitious adventurers scale the mountain, or cross the river, with design to subdue and enslave the populations they boldly invade, then all the invaded arise in wrath and defiance—the neighbours are changed into foes. And therefore this process—by which a simple though rare material of nature is made to yield to a mortal the boon of a life which brings, with its glorious resistance to Time, desires and faculties to subject to its service beings that dwell in the earth, and the air, and the deep—has ever been one of the same peril which an invader must brave when he crosses the bounds of his nation. By this key alone you unlock all the cells of the alchemist's lore; by this alone understand how a labour, which a chemist's crudest apprentice could perform, has baffled the giant fathers of all your dwarfed children of science. Nature, that stores this priceless boon, seems to shrink from conceding it to man—the invisible tribes that abhor him, oppose themselves to

the gain that might give them a master. The duller of those who were the life-seekers of old, would have told you how some chance, trivial, unlooked-for, foiled their grand hope at the very point of fruition ; some doltish mistake, some improvident oversight, a defect in the sulphur, a wild overflow in the quicksilver, or a flaw in the bellows, or a pupil who failed to replenish the fuel, by falling asleep by the furnace. The invisible foes seldom vouchsafe to make themselves visible where they can frustrate the bungler, as they mock at his toils from their ambush. But the mightier adventurers, equally foiled in despite of their patience and skill, would have said, ‘ Not with us rests the fault ; we neglected no caution, we failed from no oversight. But out from the caldron dread faces arose, and the spectres of demons dismayed and baffled us.’ Such, then, is the danger which seems so appalling to a son of the East, as it seemed to a seer in the dark age of Europe. But we can deride all its threats, you and I. For myself, I own frankly I take all the safety that the charms and resources of magic bestow. You, for your safety, have the cultured and disciplined reason which reduces all phantasies to nervous impressions ; and I rely on the courage of one who has questioned, unquailing, the Luminous Shadow, and wrested from the hand of the magician himself the wand which concentrated the wonders of will ! ”

To this strange and long discourse I listened without interruption, and now quietly answered :

“ I do not merit the trust you affect in my courage ;

but I am now on my guard against the cheats of the fancy, and the fumes of a vapour can scarcely bewilder the brain in the open air of this mountain-land. I believe in no races like those which you tell me lie viewless in space, as do gases. I believe not in magic ; I ask not its aids, and I dread not its terrors. For the rest, I am confident of one mournful courage—the courage that comes from despair. I submit to your guidance, whatever it be, as a sufferer whom colleges doom to the grave submits to the quack who says, ‘Take my specific and live!’ My life is nought in itself ; my life lives in another. You and I are both brave from despair ; you would turn death from yourself—I would turn death from one I love more than myself. Both know how little aid we can win from the colleges, and both, therefore, turn to the promisers most audaciously cheering : Dervish or magician, alchemist or phantom, what care you and I ? And if they fail us, what then ? They cannot fail us more than the colleges do !”

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE gold has been gained with an easy labour. I knew where to seek for it, whether under the turf or in the bed of the creek. But Margrave's eyes, hungrily gazing round every spot from which the ore was disburied, could not detect the substance of which he alone knew the outward appearance. I had begun to believe that, even in the description given to him of this material, he had been credulously duped, and that no such material existed; when, coming back from the bed of the watercourse, I saw a faint yellow gleam amidst the roots of a giant parasite plant, the leaves and blossoms of which climbed up the sides of the cave with its antediluvian relics. The gleam was the gleam of gold, and on removing the loose earth round the roots of the plant, we came on—No, I will not—I dare not, describe it. The gold-digger would cast it aside, the naturalist would pause not to heed it; and did I describe it, and chemistry deign to subject it to analysis, could chemistry alone detach or discover its boasted virtues?

Its particles, indeed, are very minute, not seeming readily to crystallise with each other; each in itself of

uniform shape and size, spherical as the egg which contains the germ of life, and small as the egg from which the life of an insect may quicken.

But Margrave's keen eye caught sight of the atoms upcast by the light of the moon. He exclaimed to me, "Found! I shall live!" And then, as he gathered up the grains with tremulous hands, he called out to the Veiled Woman, hitherto still seated motionless on the crag. At his word she rose and went to the place hard by, where the fuel was piled, busying herself there. I had no leisure to heed her. I continued my search in the soft and yielding soil that time and the decay of vegetable life had accumulated over the Pre-Adamite strata on which the arch of the cave rested its mighty keystone.

When we had collected of these particles about thrice as much as a man might hold in his hand, we seemed to have exhausted their bed. We continued still to find gold, but no more of the delicate substance, to which, in our sight, gold was as dross.

"Enough," then said Margrave, reluctantly desisting. "What we have gained already will suffice for a life thrice as long as legend attributes to Haroun. I shall live—I shall live through the centuries!"

"Forget not that I claim my share."

"Your share—yours! True—your half of my life! It is true." He paused with a low, ironical, malignant laugh; and then added, as he rose and turned away, "But the work is yet to be done."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

WHILE we had thus laboured and found, Ayesha had placed the fuel where the moonlight fell fullest on the sward of the table-land—a part of it already piled as for a fire, the rest of it heaped confusedly close at hand ; and by the pile she had placed the coffer. And there she stood, her arms folded under her mantle, her dark image seeming darker still as the moonlight whitened all the ground from which the image rose motionless. Margrave opened his coffer, the Veiled Woman did not aid him, and I watched in silence, while he silently made his weird and wizard-like preparations.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

On the ground a wide circle was traced by a small rod, tipped apparently with sponge saturated with some combustible naphtha-like fluid, so that a pale lambent flame followed the course of the rod as Margrave guided it, burning up the herbage over which it played, and leaving a distinct ring, like that which, in our lovely native fable-talk, we call the "Fairy's Ring," but yet more visible because marked in phosphorescent light. On the ring thus formed were placed twelve small lamps, fed with the fluid from the same vessel, and lighted by the same rod. The light emitted by the lamps was more vivid and brilliant than that which circled round the ring.

Within the circumference, and immediately round the wood-pile, Margrave traced certain geometrical figures, in which—not without a shudder, that I overcame at once by a strong effort of will in murmuring to myself the name of "Lilian"—I recognised the interlaced triangles which my own hand, in the spell enforced on a sleep-walker, had described on the floor of the wizard's pavilion. The figures were traced, like the circle, in flame, and at the point of each

triangle (four in number) was placed a lamp, brilliant as those on the ring. This task performed, the caldron, based on an iron tripod, was placed on the wood-pile. And then the woman, before inactive and unheeding, slowly advanced, knelt by the pile, and lighted it. The dry wood crackled and the flame burst forth, licking the rims of the caldron with tongues of fire.

Margrave flung into the caldron the particles we had collected, poured over them first a liquid, colourless as water, from the largest of the vessels drawn from his coffer, and then, more sparingly, drops from small crystal phials, like the phials I had seen in the hand of Philip Derval.

Having surmounted my first impulse of awe, I watched these proceedings, curious yet disdainful, as one who watches the mummeries of an enchanter on the stage.

“If,” thought I, “these are but artful devices to inebriate and fool my own imagination, my imagination is on its guard, and reason shall not, this time, sleep at her post!”

“And now,” said Margrave, “I consign to you the easy task by which you are to merit your share of the elixir. It is my task to feed and replenish the caldron; it is Ayesha’s to heed the fire, which must not for a moment relax in its measured and steady heat. Your task is the lightest of all: it is but to renew from this vessel the fluid that burns in the lamps, and on the ring. Observe, the contents of the

vessel must be thriftily husbanded ; there is enough, but not more than enough, to sustain the light in the lamps, on the lines traced round the caldron, and on the farther ring, for six hours. The compounds dissolved in this fluid are scarce—only obtainable in the East, and even in the East months might have passed before I could have increased my supply. I had no months to waste. Replenish, then, the light only when it begins to flicker or fade. Take heed, above all, that no part of the outer ring—no, not an inch—and no lamp of the twelve, that are to its zodiac like stars, fade for one moment in darkness.”

I took the crystal vessel from his hand.

“The vessel is small,” said I, “and what is yet left of its contents is but scanty ; whether its drops suffice to replenish the lights I cannot guess—I can but obey your instructions. But, more important by far than the light to the lamps and the circle, which in Asia or Africa might scare away the wild beasts unknown to this land—more important than light to a lamp, is the strength to your frame, weak magician ! What will support you through six weary hours of night-watch ?”

“Hope,” answered Margrave, with a ray of his old dazzling smile. “Hope ! I shall live—I shall live through the centuries !”

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

ONE hour passed away, the faggots under the caldron burned clear in the sullen sultry air. The materials within began to seethe, and their colour, at first dull and turbid, changed into a pale-rose hue ; from time to time the Veiled Woman replenished the fire, after she had done so reseating herself close by the pyre, with her head bowed over her knees, and her face hid under her veil.

The lights in the lamps and along the ring and the triangles now began to pale. I resupplied their nutriment from the crystal vessel. As yet nothing strange startled my eye or my ear beyond the rim of the circle. Nothing audible, save, at a distance, the musical wheel-like click of the locusts, and, farther still in the forest, the howl of the wild dogs that never bark. Nothing visible but the trees and the mountain-range girding the plains silvered by the moon, and the arch of the cavern, the flush of wild blooms on its sides, and the gleam of dry bones on its floor, where the moonlight shot into the gloom.

The second hour passed like the first. I had taken my stand by the side of Margrave, watching with him

the process at work in the caldron, when I felt the ground slightly vibrate beneath my feet, and, looking up, it seemed as if all the plains beyond the circle were heaving like the swell of the sea, and as if in the air itself there was a perceptible tremor.

I placed my hand on Margrave's shoulder, and whispered, "To me earth and air seem to vibrate. Do they seem to vibrate to you?"

"I know not, I care not," he answered impetuously. "The essence is bursting the shell that confined it. Here are my air and my earth! Trouble me not. Look to the circle—feed the lamps if they fail."

I passed by the Veiled Woman as I walked towards a place in the ring in which the flame was waning dim. And I whispered to her the same question which I had whispered to Margrave. She looked slowly around and answered, "So is it before the Invisible make themselves visible! Did I not bid him forbear?" Her head again drooped on her breast, and her watch was again fixed on the fire.

I advanced to the circle and stooped to replenish the light where it waned. As I did so, on my arm, which stretched somewhat beyond the line of the ring, I felt a shock like that of electricity. The arm fell to my side numbed and nerveless, and from my hand dropped, but within the ring, the vessel that contained the fluid. Recovering my surprise or my stun, hastily with the other hand I caught up the vessel, but some of the scanty liquid was already spilled on the sward; and I saw with a thrill of dismay, that contrasted

indeed the tranquil indifference with which I had first undertaken my charge, how small a supply was now left.

I went back to Margrave, and told him of the shock, and of its consequence in the waste of the liquid.

“Beware,” said he, “that not a motion of the arm, not an inch of the foot, pass the verge of the ring ; and if the fluid be thus unhappily stinted, reserve all that is left for the protecting circle and the twelve outer lamps ! See how the Grand Work advances ! how the hues in the caldron are glowing blood-red through the film on the surface !”

And now four hours of the six were gone ; my arm had gradually recovered its strength. Neither the ring nor the lamps had again required replenishing ; perhaps their light was exhausted less quickly, as it was no longer to be exposed to the rays of the intense Australian moon. Clouds had gathered over the sky, and though the moon gleamed at times in the gaps that they left in blue air, her beam was more hazy and dulled. The locusts no longer were heard in the grass, nor the howl of the dogs in the forest. Out of the circle, the stillness was profound.

And about this time I saw distinctly in the distance a vast Eye ! It drew nearer and nearer, seeming to move from the ground at the height of some lofty giant. Its gaze riveted mine ; my blood curdled in the blaze from its angry ball ; and now as it advanced larger and larger, other Eyes, as if of giants in its train, grew out from the space in its rear : numbers on num-

bers, like the spearheads of some Eastern army, seen afar by pale warders of battlements doomed to the dust. My voice long refused an utterance to my awe ; at length it burst forth shrill and loud—

“Look—look ! Those terrible Eyes ! Legions on legions. And hark ! that tramp of numberless feet ; *they* are not seen, but the hollows of earth echo the sound of their march !”

Margrave, more than ever intent on the caldron, in which, from time to time, he kept dropping powders or essences drawn forth from his coffer, looked up defyingly, fiercely—

“Ye come,” he said in a low mutter, his once mighty voice sounding hollow and labouring, but fearless and firm—“ye come,—not to conquer, vain rebels !—ye whose dark chief I struck down at my feet in the tomb where my spell had raised up the ghost of your first human master, the Chaldee ! Earth and air have their armies still faithful to me, and still I remember the war-song that summons them up to confront you ! Ayesha—Ayesha ! recall the wild troth that we pledged amongst roses ; recall the dread bond by which we united our sway over hosts that yet own thee as queen, though my sceptre is broken, my diadem reft from my brows !”

The Veiled Woman rose at this adjuration. Her veil now was withdrawn, and the blaze of the fire between Margrave and herself flushed, as with the rosy bloom of youth, the grand beauty of her softened face. It was seen detached, as it were, from her dark-

mantled form ; seen through the mist of the vapours which rose from the caldron, framing it round like the clouds that are yieldingly pierced by the light of the evening star.

Through the haze of the vapour came her voice, more musical, more plaintive than I had heard it before, but far softer, more tender ; still in her foreign tongue ; the words unknown to me, and yet their sense, perhaps, made intelligible by the love, which has one common language and one common look to all who have loved—the love unmistakably heard in the loving tone, unmistakably seen in the loving face.

A moment or so more, and she had come round from the opposite side of the fire-pile, and, bending over Margrave's upturned brow, kissed it quietly, solemnly ; and then her countenance grew fierce, her crest rose erect ; it was the lioness protecting her young. She stretched forth her arm from the black mantle, athwart the pale front that now again bent over the caldron ; stretched it towards the haunted and hollow-sounding space beyond, in the gesture of one whose right hand has the sway of the sceptre. And then her voice stole on the air in the music of a chant, not loud, yet far-reaching ; so thrilling, so sweet, and yet so solemn, that I could at once comprehend how legend united of old the spell of enchantment with the power of song. All that I recalled of the effects which, in the former time, Margrave's strange chants had produced on the ear that they ravished and the thoughts they confused, was but as the wild bird's

imitative carol, compared to the depth, and the art, and the soul of the singer, whose voice seemed endowed with a charm to enthral all the tribes of creation, though the language it used for that charm might to them, as to me, be unknown. As the song ceased, I heard, from behind, sounds like those I had heard in the spaces before me: the tramp of invisible feet, the whirr of invisible wings, as if armies were marching to aid against armies in march to destroy.

“Look not in front nor around,” said Ayesha. “Look, like him, on the caldron below. The circle and the lamps are yet bright; I will tell thee when the light again fails.”

I dropped my eyes on the caldron.

“See,” whispered Margrave, “the sparkles at last begin to arise, and the rose-hues to deepen—signs that we near the last process.”

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE fifth hour had passed away, when Ayesha said to me, "Lo ! the circle is fading ; the lamps grow dim. Look now without fear on the space beyond ; the eyes that appalled thee are again lost in air, as lightnings that fleet back into cloud."

I looked up, and the spectres had vanished. The sky was tinged with sulphurous hues, the red and the black intermixed. I replenished the lamps and the ring in front, thriftily, heedfully ; but when I came to the sixth lamp, not a drop in the vessel that fed them was left. In a vague dismay, I now looked round the half of the wide circle in rear of the two bended figures intent on the caldron. All along that disc the light was already broken, here and there flickering up, here and there dying down ; the six lamps in that half of the circle still twinkled, but faintly, as stars shrinking fast from the dawn of day. But it was not the fading shine in that half of the magical ring which daunted my eye and quickened with terror the pulse of my heart ; the Bush-land beyond was on fire. From the background of the forest rose the flame and the smoke—the smoke there still

half smothering the flame. But along the width of the grasses and herbage, between the verge of the forest and the bed of the water-creek just below the raised platform from which I beheld the dread conflagration, the fire was advancing—wave upon wave, clear and red against the columns of rock behind—as the rush of a flood through the mists of some Alp crowned with lightnings.

Roused from my stun at the first sight of a danger not foreseen by the mind I had steeled against far rarer portents of nature, I cared no more for the lamps and the circle. Hurrying back to Ayesha, I exclaimed: “The phantoms have gone from the spaces in front; but what incantation or spell can arrest the red march of the foe speeding on in the rear? While we gazed on the caldron of life, behind us, unheeded, behold the Destroyer!”

Ayesha looked and made no reply; but, as by involuntary instinct, bowed her majestic head, then rearing it erect, placed herself yet more immediately before the wasted form of the young magician (he still bending over the caldron, and hearing me not in the absorption and hope of his watch)—placed herself before him, as the bird whose first care is her fledgling.

As we two there stood, fronting the deluge of fire, we heard Margrave behind us, murmuring low, “See the bubbles of light, how they sparkle and dance—I shall live, I shall live!” And his words scarcely died in our ears before, crash upon crash, came the fall of the age-long trees in the forest; and nearer, all near

us, through the blazing grasses, the hiss of the serpents, the scream of the birds, and the bellow and tramp of the herds plunging wild through the billowy red of their pastures.

Ayesha now wound her arms around Margrave, and wrenched him, reluctant and struggling, from his watch over the seething caldron. In rebuke of his angry exclamations, she pointed to the march of the fire, spoke in sorrowful tones a few words in her own language, and then, appealing to me in English, said—

“I tell him that here the Spirits who oppose us have summoned a foe that is deaf to my voice, and——”

“And,” exclaimed Margrave, no longer with gasp and effort, but with the swell of a voice which drowned all the discords of terror, and of agony sent forth from the Phlegethon burning below—“and this witch, whom I trusted, is a vile slave and impostor, more desiring my death than my life. She thinks that in life I should scorn and forsake her, that in death I should die in her arms! Sorceress, avaunt! Art thou useless and powerless now when I need thee most? Go. Let the world be one funeral pyre! What to *me* is the world? My world is my life! Thou knowest that my last hope is here—that all the strength left me this night will die down, like the lamps in the circle, unless the elixir restore it. Bold friend, spurn that sorceress away. Hours yet ere those flames can assail us! A few minutes more, and life to your Lilian and me!”

Thus having said, Margrave turned from us, and

cast into the caldron the last essence yet left in his emptied coffer.

Ayesha silently drew her black veil over her face, and turned, with the being she loved, from the terror he scorned, to share in the hope that he cherished.

Thus left alone, with my reason disenthralled, disenchanted, I surveyed more calmly the extent of the actual peril with which we were threatened, and the peril seemed less so surveyed.

It is true, all the Bush-land behind, almost up to the bed of the creek, was on fire ; but the grasses, through which the flame spread so rapidly, ceased at the opposite marge of the creek. Watery pools were still, at intervals, left in the bed of the creek, shining tremulous, like waves of fire, in the glare reflected from the burning land ; and even, where the water failed, the stony course of the exhausted rivulet was a barrier against the march of the conflagration. Thus, unless the wind, now still, should rise, and waft some sparks to the parched combustible herbage immediately around us, we were saved from the fire, and our work might yet be achieved.

I whispered to Ayesha the conclusion to which I came.

“Thinkest thou,” she answered, without raising her mournful head, “that the Agencies of Nature are the movements of chance? The Spirits I invoked to his aid are leagued with the hosts that assail. A Mightier than I am has doomed him !”

Scarcely had she uttered these words before Mar-

grave exclaimed, "Behold how the Rose of the alchemist's dream enlarges its blooms from the folds of its petals ! I shall live—I shall live !"

I looked, and the liquid which glowed in the caldron had now taken a splendour that mocked all comparisons borrowed from the lustre of gems. In its prevalent colour it had, indeed, the dazzle and flash of the ruby ; but out from the mass of the molten red broke coruscations of all prismatic hues, shooting, shifting, in a play that made the wavelets themselves seem living things, sensible of their joy. No longer was there scum or film upon the surface ; only ever and anon a light rosy vapour floating up, and quick lost in the haggard, heavy, sulphurous air, hot with the conflagration rushing towards us from behind. And these coruscations formed, on the surface of the molten ruby, literally the shape of a Rose, its leaves made distinct in their outlines by sparks of emerald, and diamond, and sapphire.

Even while gazing on this animate liquid lustre, a buoyant delight seemed infused into my senses ; all terrors conceived before were annulled ; the phantoms, whose armies had filled the wide spaces in front, were forgotten ; the crash of the forest behind was unheard. In the reflection of that glory, Margrave's wan cheek seemed already restored to the radiance it wore when I saw it first in the framework of blooms.

As I gazed, thus enchanted, a cold hand touched my own.

"Hush !" whispered Ayesha, from the black veil,

against which the rays from the caldron fell blunt, and absorbed into Dark. "Behind us, the light of the circle is extinct, but there we are guarded from all save the brutal and soulless destroyers. But before! —but before! see, two of the lamps have died out! —see the blank of the gap in the ring! Guard that breach—there, the demons will enter."

"Not a drop is there left in this vessel by which to replenish the lamps on the ring."

"Advance, then; thou hast still the light of the soul, and the demons may recoil before a soul that is dauntless and guiltless. If not, Three are lost!—as it is, One is doomed."

Thus adjured, silently, involuntarily, I passed from the Veiled Woman's side, over the sere lines on the turf which had been traced by the triangles of light long since extinguished, and towards the verge of the circle. As I advanced, overhead rushed a dark cloud of wings—birds dislodged from the forest on fire, and screaming, in dissonant terror, as they flew towards the furthestmost mountains; close by my feet hissed and glided the snakes, driven forth from their blazing coverts, and glancing through the ring, unscared by its waning lamps—all undulating by me, bright-eyed and hissing—all made innocuous by fear: even the terrible Death-adder, which I trampled on as I halted at the verge of the circle, did not turn to bite, but crept harmless away. I halted at the gap between the two dead lamps, and bowed my head to look again into the crystal vessel. Were there, indeed, no lingering

drops yet left, if but to recruit the lamps for some priceless minutes more? As I thus stood, right into the gap between the two dead lamps strode a gigantic Foot. All the rest of the form was unseen; only as volume after volume of smoke poured on from the burning land behind, it seemed as if one great column of vapour, eddying round, settled itself aloft from the circle, and that out from that column strode the giant Foot. And, as strode the Foot, so with it came, like the sound of its tread, a roll of muttered thunder.

I recoiled, with a cry that rang loud through the lurid air.

“Courage!” said the voice of Ayesha. “Trembling soul, yield not an inch to the demon!”

At the charm, the wonderful charm, in the tone of the Veiled Woman’s voice, my will seemed to take a force more sublime than its own. I folded my arms on my breast, and stood as if rooted to the spot, confronting the column of smoke and the stride of the giant Foot. And the Foot halted, mute.

Again, in the momentary hush of that suspense, I heard a voice—it was Margrave’s.

“The last hour expires—the work is accomplished! Come! come!—aid me to take the caldron from the fire; and, quick!—or a drop may be wasted in vapour—the Elixir of Life from the caldron!”

At that cry I receded, and the Foot advanced.

And at that moment, suddenly, unawares, from behind, I was stricken down. Over me, as I lay, swept a whirlwind of trampling hoofs and glancing horns.

The herds, in their flight from the burning pastures, had rushed over the bed of the watercourse—scaled the slopes of the banks. Snorting and bellowing, they plunged their blind way to the mountains. One cry alone, more wild than their own savage blare, pierced the reek through which the Brute Hurricane swept. At that cry of wrath and despair I struggled to rise, again dashed to earth by the hoofs and the horns. But was it the dream-like deceit of my reeling senses, or did I see that giant Foot stride past through the close-serried ranks of the maddening herds? Did I hear, distinct through all the huge uproar of animal terror, the roll of low thunder which followed the stride of that Foot?

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

WHEN my sense had recovered its shock, and my eyes looked dizzily round, the charge of the beasts had swept by; and of all the wild tribes which had invaded the magical circle, the only lingerer was the brown Death-adder, coiled close by the spot where my head had rested. Beside the extinguished lamps which the hoofs had confusedly scattered, the fire, arrested by the watercourse, had consumed the grasses that fed it, and there the plains stretched, black and desert as the Phlegræan Field of the Poet's Hell. But the fire still raged in the forest beyond: white flames, soaring up from the trunks of the tallest trees, and forming, through the sullen dark of the smoke-reek, innumerable pillars of fire, like the halls in the City of Fiends.

Gathering myself up, I turned my eyes from the terrible pomp of the lurid forest, and looked fearfully down on the hoof-trampled sward for my two companions.

I saw the dark image of Ayesha still seated, still bending, as I had seen it last. I saw a pale hand feebly grasping the rim of the magical caldron, which lay, hurled down from its tripod by the rush of the

beasts, yards away from the dim fading embers of the scattered wood-pyre. I saw the faint writhings of a frail wasted frame, over which the Veiled Woman was bending. I saw, as I moved with bruised limbs to the place, close by the lips of the dying magician, the flash of the ruby-like essence spilt on the sword, and, meteor-like, sparkling up from the torn tufts of herbage.

I now reached Margrave's side. Bending over him as the Veiled Woman bent, and as I sought gently to raise him, he turned his face, fiercely faltering out, "Touch me not, rob me not ! *You* share with me ! Never !—never ! These glorious drops are all mine ! Die all else ! I will live—I will live !" Writhing himself from my pitying arms, he plunged his face amidst the beautiful playful flame of the essence, as if to lap the elixir with lips scorched away from its intolerable burning. Suddenly, with a low shriek, he fell back, his face upturned to mine, and on that face unmistakably reigned Death !

Then Ayesha tenderly, silently, drew the young head to her lap, and it vanished from my sight behind her black veil.

I knelt beside her, murmuring some trite words of comfort ; but she heeded me not, rocking herself to and fro as the mother who cradles her child to sleep. Soon the fast-flickering sparkles of the lost elixir died out on the grass ; and with their last sportive diamond-like tremble of light, up, in all the suddenness of Australian day, rose the sun, lifting himself royally

above the mountain-tops, and fronting the meaner blaze of the forest as a young king fronts his rebels. And as there, where the bush-fires had ravaged, all was a desert; so there, where their fury had not spread, all was a garden. Afar, at the foot of the mountains, the fugitive herds were grazing; the cranes, flocking back to the pools, renewed the strange grace of their gambols; and the great kingfisher, whose laugh, half in mirth, half in mockery, leads the choir that welcome the morn—which in Europe is night—alighted bold on the roof of the cavern whose floors were still white with the bones of races, extinct before—so helpless through instincts, so royal through Soul—rose MAN!

But there, on the ground where the dazzling elixir had wasted its virtues—there the herbage already had a freshness of verdure which, amid the duller sward round it, was like an oasis of green in a desert. And there, wild flowers, whose chill hues the eye would have scarcely distinguished the day before, now glittered forth in blooms of unfamiliar beauty. Towards that spot were attracted myriads of happy insects, whose hum of intense joy was musically loud. But the form of the life-seeking sorcerer lay rigid and stark—blind to the bloom of the wild flowers, deaf to the glee of the insects—one hand still resting heavily on the rim of the emptied caldron, and the face still hid behind the Black Veil. What! the wondrous elixir, sought with such hope and wellnigh achieved through such dread, fleeting back to the earth, from

which its material was drawn, to give bloom, indeed—but to herbs ; joy indeed—but to insects !

And now in the flash of the sun slowly wound up the slopes that led to the circle the same barbaric procession which had sunk into the valley under the ray of the moon. The armed men came first, stalwart and tall, their vests brave with crimson and golden lace—their weapons gaily gleaming with holiday silver. After them, the Black Litter. As they came to the place, Ayesha, not raising her head, spoke to them in her own Eastern tongue. A wail was their answer. The armed men bounded forward, and the bearers left the litter.

All gathered round the dead form with the face concealed under the black veil—all knelt, and all wept. Far in the distance, at the foot of the blue mountains, a crowd of the savage natives had risen up as if from the earth ; they stood motionless, leaning on their clubs and spears, and looking towards the spot on which we were—strangely thus brought into the landscape, as if they too, the wild dwellers on the verge which Humanity guards from the Brute, were among the mourners for the mysterious Child of mysterious Nature ! And still, in the herbage, hummed the small insects, and still, from the cavern, laughed the great kingfisher. I said to Ayesha, “ Farewell ! your love mourns the dead, mine calls me to the living. You are now with your own people, they may console you—say if I can assist.”

“ There is no consolation for me ! What mourner

can be consoled if the dead die for ever? Nothing for him is left but a grave; that grave shall be in the land where the song of Ayesha first lulled him to sleep. Thou assist me—thou, the wise man of Europe! From me ask assistance. What road wilt thou take to thy home?"

"There is but one road known to me through the maze of the solitude—that which we took to this upland."

"On that road Death lurks and awaits thee! Blind dupe, couldst thou think that if the grand secret of life had been won, he whose head rests on my lap would have yielded thee one petty drop of the essence which had filched from his store of life but a moment? Me, who so loved and so cherished him—me he would have doomed to the pitiless cord of my servant, the Strangler, if my death could have lengthened a hair-breadth the span of his being. But what matters to me his crime or his madness? I loved him—I loved him!"

She bowed her veiled head lower and lower: perhaps under the veil her lips kissed the lips of the dead. Then she said, whisperingly—

"Juma, the Strangler, whose word never failed to his master, whose prey never slipped from his snare, waits thy step on the road to thy home! But thy death cannot now profit the dead, the beloved. And thou hast had pity for him who took but thine aid to design thy destruction. His life is lost, thine is saved!"

She spoke no more in the tongue that I could interpret. She spoke, in the language unknown, a few murmured words to her swarthy attendants ; then the armed men, still weeping, rose and made a dumb sign to me to go with them. I understood by the sign that Ayesha had told them to guard me on my way ; but she gave no reply to my parting thanks.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

I DESCENDED into the valley ; the armed men followed. The path, on that side of the watercourse not reached by the flames, wound through meadows still green, or amidst groves still unscathed. As a turning in the way brought in front of my sight the place I had left behind, I beheld the black litter creeping down the descent, with its curtains elosed, and the Veiled Woman walking by its side. But soon the funeral proceession was lost to my eyes, and the thoughts that it roused were erased. The waves in man's brain are like those of the sea, rushing on, rushing over the wrecks of the vessels that rode on their surface, to sink, after storm, in their deeps. One thought cast forth into the future now mastered all in the past—"Was Lilian living still?" Absorbed in the gloom of that thought, hurried on by the goad that my heart, in its tortured impatience, gave to my footstep, I outstripped the slow stride of the armed men, and, midway between the place I had left and the home which I sped to, came, far in advance of my guards, into the thicket in which the bushmen had started up in my path on the night that Lilian had watched for my coming. The earth at

my feet was rife with creeping plants and many-coloured flowers, the sky overhead was half hid by motionless pines. Suddenly, whether crawling out from the herbage or dropping down from the trees, by my side stood the white-robed and skeleton form—Ayesha's attendant, the Strangler.

I sprang from him in shuddering, then halted and faced him. The hideous creature crept towards me, cringing and fawning, making signs of humble goodwill and servile obeisance. Again I recoiled—wrathfully, loathingly ; turned my face homeward, and fled on. I thought I had baffled his chase, when, just at the mouth of the thicket, he dropped from a bough in my path close behind me. Before I could turn, some dark muffling substance fell between my sight and the sun, and I felt a fierce strain at my throat. But the words of Ayesha had warned me ; with one rapid hand I seized the noose before it could tighten too closely, with the other I tore the bandage away from my eyes, and, wheeling round on the dastardly foe, struck him down with one spurn of my foot. His hand, as he fell, relaxed its hold on the noose ; I freed my throat from the knot, and sprang from the copse into the broad sunlit plain. I saw no more of the armed men or the Strangler. Panting and breathless, I paused at last before the fence, fragrant with blossoms, that divided my home from the solitude.

The windows of Lilian's room were darkened—all within the house seemed still.

Darkened and silenced Home ! with the light and

sounds of the jocund day all around it. Was there yet Hope in the Universe for me? All to which I had trusted Hope had broken down; the anchors I had forged for her hold in the beds of the ocean, her stay from the drifts of the storm, had snapped like the reeds which pierce the side that leans on the barb of their points, and confides in the strength of their stems. No hope in the baffled resources of recognised knowledge! No hope in the daring adventures of Mind into regions unknown; vain alike the calm lore of the practised physician, and the magical arts of the fated Enchanter! I had fled from the commonplace teachings of Nature, to explore in her Shadow-land marvels at variance with reason. Made brave by the grandeur of love, I had opposed without quailing the stride of the Demon, and my hope, when fruition seemed nearest, had been trodden into dust by the hoofs of the beast! And yet, all the while, I had scorned, as a dream more wild than the word of a sorcerer, the hope that the old man and child, the wise and the ignorant, took from their souls as inborn. Man and fiend had alike failed a mind, not ignoble, not skillless, not abjectly craven; alike failed a heart not feeble and selfish, not dead to the hero's devotion, willing to shed every drop of its blood for a something more dear than an animal's life for itself! What remained—what remained for man's hope?—man's mind and man's heart thus exhausting their all with no other result but despair? What remained but the mystery of mysteries, so clear to the sunrise of childhood, the

sunset of age, only dimmed by the clouds which collect round the noon of our manhood? Where yet was Hope found? In the soul; in its everyday impulse to supplicate comfort and light, from the Giver of soul, wherever the heart is afflicted, the mind is obscured.

Then the words of Ayesha rushed over me—"What mourner can be consoled, if the Dead die for ever?" Through every pulse of my frame throbbed that dread question. All Nature around seemed to murmur it. And suddenly, as by a flash from Heaven, the grand truth in Faber's grand reasoning shone on me, and lighted up all, within and without. Man alone, of all earthly creatures, asks, "Can the Dead die for ever?" and the instinct that urges the question is God's answer to man! No instinct is given in vain.

And, born with the instinct of soul is the instinct that leads the soul from the seen to the unseen, from time to eternity, from the torrent that foams towards the Ocean of Death, to the source of its stream, far aloft from the Ocean.

"Know thyself," said the Pythian of old. "That precept descended from Heaven." Know thyself! is that maxim wise? If so, know thy soul. But never yet did man come to the thorough conviction of soul, but what he acknowledged the sovereign necessity of prayer. In my awe, in my rapture, all my thoughts seemed enlarged and illumed and exalted. I prayed—all my soul seemed one prayer. All my past, with its pride and presumption and folly, grew distinct as the form of a penitent, kneeling for pardon before setting

forth on the pilgrimage vowed to a shrine. And, sure now, in the deeps of a soul first revealed to myself, that the Dead do not die for ever, my human love soared beyond its brief trial of terror and sorrow. Daring not to ask from Heaven's wisdom that Lilian, for my sake, might not yet pass away from the earth, I prayed that my soul might be fitted to bear with submission whatever my Maker might ordain. And, if surviving her—without whom no beam from yon material sun could ever warm into joy a morrow in human life—so to guide my steps that they might rejoin her at last, and, in rejoining, regain for ever !

How trivial now became the weird riddles that, a little while before, had been clothed in so solemn an awe ! What mattered it to the vast interests involved in the clear recognition of Soul and Hereafter, whether or not my bodily sense, for a moment, obscured the face of the Nature I should one day behold as a spirit ? Doubtless the sights and the sounds which had haunted the last gloomy night, the calm reason of Faber would strip of their magical seemings ; —the Eyes in the space and the Foot in the circle might be those of no terrible Demons, but of the wild's savage children whom I had seen, halting, curious and mute, in the light of the morning. The tremor of the ground (if not, as heretofore, explicable by the illusory impression of my own treacherous senses) might be but the natural effect of elements struggling yet under a soil unmistakably charred by volcanoes. The luminous atoms dissolved in the caldron might as

little be fraught with a vital elixir as are the splendours of naphtha or phosphor. As it was, the weird rite had no magic result. The magician was not rent limb from limb by the fiends. By causes as natural as ever extinguished life's spark in the frail lamp of clay, he had died out of sight—under the black veil.

What mattered henceforth to Faith, in its far grander questions and answers, whether Reason in Faber, or Fancy in me, supplied the more probable guess at a hieroglyph which, if construed aright, was but a word of small mark in the mystical language of Nature? If all the arts of enchantment recorded by fable were attested by facts which Sages were forced to acknowledge, Sages would sooner or later find some cause for such portents—not supernatural. But what Sage, without cause supernatural, both without and within him, can guess at the wonders he views in the growth of a blade of grass, or the tints on an insect's wing? Whatever art Man can achieve in his progress through time, Man's reason, in time, can suffice to explain. But the wonders of God? These belong to the Infinite; and these, O Immortal! will but develop new wonder on wonder, though thy sight be a spirit's, and thy leisure to track and to solve an eternity.

As I raised my face from my clasped hands, my eyes fell full upon a form standing in the open doorway. There, where, on the night in which Lilian's long struggle for reason and life had begun, the Luminous Shadow had been beheld in the doubtful light of a dying moon and a yet hazy dawn; there, on the

threshold, gathering round her bright locks the aureole of the glorious sun, stood Amy, the blessed child ! And as I gazed, drawing nearer and nearer to the silenced house, and that Image of Peace on its threshold, I felt that Hope met me at the door—Hope in the child's steadfast eyes—Hope in the child's welcoming smile !

“ I was at watch for you,” whispered Amy. “ All is well.”

“ She lives still—she lives ! Thank God—thank God ! ”

“ She lives—she will recover ! ” said another voice, as my head sank on Faber's shoulder. “ For some hours in the night her sleep was disturbed—convulsed. I feared, then, the worst. Suddenly, just before the dawn, she called out aloud, still in sleep—

“ ‘ The cold and dark shadow has passed away from me, and from Allen—passed away from us both for ever ! ’

“ And from that moment the fever left her ; the breathing became soft, the pulse steady, and the colour stole gradually back to her cheek. The crisis is past. Nature's benign Disposer has permitted Nature to restore your life's gentle partner, heart to heart, mind to mind——”

“ And soul to soul,” I cried, in solemn joy. “ Above as below, soul to soul ! ” Then, at a sign from Faber, the child took me by the hand and led me up the stairs into Lilian's room.

Again those dear arms closed round me in wife-like

and holy love, and those true lips kissed away my tears;—even as now, at the distance of years from that happy morn, while I write the last words of this Strange Story, the same faithful arms close around me, the same tender lips kiss away my tears.

END OF A STRANGE STORY.

THE HAUNTED AND THE HAUNTERS

OR

THE HOUSE AND THE BRAIN

THE HAUNTED AND THE HAUNTERS;

OR,

THE HOUSE AND THE BRAIN.



[THIS tale first appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' August 1859. A portion of it as then published is now suppressed, because encroaching too much on the main plot of the 'Strange Story.' As it stands, however, it may be considered the preliminary outline of that more elaborate attempt to construct an interest akin to that which our forefathers felt in tales of witchcraft and ghostland, out of ideas and beliefs which have crept into fashion in the society of our own day. There has, perhaps, been no age in which certain phenomena that in all ages have been produced by, or upon, certain physical temperaments, have excited so general a notice—more, perhaps, among the educated classes than the uneducated. Nor do I believe that there is any age in which those phenomena have engendered throughout a wider circle a more credulous superstition. But, on the other hand, there has certainly been no age in which persons of critical and inquisitive intellect—seeking to divest what is genuine in these apparent vagaries of Nature from the cheats of venal impostors and the exaggeration of puzzled witnesses—have more soberly endeavoured to render such exceptional thaumaturgia of philosophical use, in enlarging our conjectural knowledge of the complex

laws of being—sometimes through physiological, sometimes through metaphysical research. Without discredit, however, to the many able and distinguished speculators on so vague a subject, it must be observed that their explanations as yet have been rather ingenious than satisfactory. Indeed, the first requisites for conclusive theory are at present wanting. The facts are not sufficiently generalised, and the evidences for them have not been sufficiently tested.

It is just when elements of the marvellous are thus struggling between superstition and philosophy, that they fall by right to the domain of Art—the art of poet or tale-teller. They furnish the constructor of imaginative fiction with materials for mysterious terror of a character not exhausted by his predecessors, and not foreign to the notions that float on the surface of his own time ; while they allow him to wander freely over that range of conjecture which is favourable to his purposes, precisely because science itself has not yet disenchanted that debatable realm of its haunted shadows and goblin lights.]

A FRIEND of mine, who is a man of letters and a philosopher, said to me one day, as if between jest and earnest, “Fancy ! since we last met, I have discovered a haunted house in the midst of London.”

“Really haunted ?—and by what ? ghosts ?”

“Well, I can’t answer that question ; all I know is this : Six weeks ago I and my wife were in search of a furnished apartment. Passing a quiet street, we saw on the window of one of the houses a bill, ‘Apartments Furnished.’ The situation suited us : we entered the house—liked the rooms—engaged them by the week—and left them the third day. No power on earth could have reconciled my wife to have stayed longer ; and I don’t wonder at it.”

“What did you see ?”

“Excuse me—I have no desire to be ridiculed as a superstitious dreamer—nor, on the other hand, could

I ask you to accept on my affirmation what you would hold to be incredible without the evidence of your own senses. Let me only say this, it was not so much what we saw or heard (in which you might fairly suppose that we were the dupes of our own excited fancy, or the victims of imposture in others) that drove us away, as it was an undefinable terror which seized both of us whenever we passed by the door of a certain unfurnished room, in which we neither saw nor heard anything. And the strangest marvel of all was that for once in my life I agreed with my wife, silly woman though she be—and allowed, after the third night, that it was impossible to stay a fourth in that house. Accordingly, on the fourth morning I summoned the woman who kept the house and attended on us, and told her that the rooms did not quite suit us, and we would not stay out our week. She said, dryly, ‘I know why ; you have stayed longer than any other lodger. Few ever stayed a second night ; none before you a third. But I take it they have been very kind to you.’

“‘They?—who?’ I asked, affecting a smile.

“‘Why, they who haunt the house, whoever they are. I don’t mind them ; I remember them many years ago, when I lived in this house, not as a servant ; but I know they will be the death of me some day. I don’t care—I’m old, and must die soon anyhow ; and then I shall be with them and in this house still.’ The woman spoke with so dreary a calmness, that really it was a sort of awe that prevented my convers-

ing with her further. I paid for my week, and too happy were I and my wife to get off so cheaply."

"You excite my curiosity," said I; "nothing I should like better than to sleep in a haunted house. Pray give me the address of the one which you left so ignominiously."

My friend gave me the address; and when we parted, I walked straight towards the house thus indicated.

It is situated on the north side of Oxford Street, in a dull but respectable thoroughfare. I found the house shut up—no bill at the window, and no response to my knock. As I was turning away, a beer-boy, collecting pewter pots at the neighbouring areas, said to me, "Do you want any one at that house, sir?"

"Yes, I heard it was to be let."

"Let!—why, the woman who kept it is dead—has been dead these three weeks, and no one can be found to stay there, though Mr J—— offered ever so much. He offered mother, who chars for him, £1 a-week just to open and shut the windows, and she would not."

"Would not!—and why?"

"The house is haunted; and the old woman who kept it was found dead in her bed, with her eyes wide open. They say the devil strangled her."

"Pooh! You speak of Mr J——; is he the owner of the house?"

"Yes."

"Where does he live?"

"In G—— Street, No. —."

“What is he?—in any business?”

“No, sir—nothing particular; a single gentleman.”

I gave the pot-boy the gratuity earned by his liberal information, and proceeded to Mr J—— in G—— Street, which was close by the street that boasted the haunted house. I was lucky enough to find Mr J—— at home—an elderly man, with intelligent countenance and prepossessing manners.

I communicated my name and my business frankly. I said I heard the house was considered to be haunted—that I had a strong desire to examine a house with so equivocal a reputation—that I should be greatly obliged if he would allow me to hire it, though only for a night. I was willing to pay for that privilege whatever he might be inclined to ask. “Sir,” said Mr J——, with great courtesy, “the house is at your service, for as short or as long a time as you please. Rent is out of the question—the obligation will be on my side should you be able to discover the cause of the strange phenomena which at present deprive it of all value. I cannot let it, for I cannot even get a servant to keep it in order or answer the door. Unluckily the house is haunted, if I may use that expression, not only by night but by day; though at night the disturbances are of a more unpleasant and sometimes of a more alarming character. The poor old woman who died in it three weeks ago was a pauper whom I took out of a workhouse, for in her childhood she had been known to some of my family, and had once been in such good circumstances that

she had rented that house of my uncle. She was a woman of superior education and strong mind, and was the only person I could ever induce to remain in the house. Indeed, since her death, which was sudden, and the coroner's inquest, which gave it a notoriety in the neighbourhood, I have so despaired of finding any person to take charge of the house, much more a tenant, that I would willingly let it rent-free for a year to any one who would pay its rates and taxes."

"How long is it since the house acquired this sinister character?"

"That I can scarcely tell you, but very many years since. The old woman I spoke of said it was haunted when she rented it between thirty and forty years ago. The fact is, that my life has been spent in the East Indies, and in the civil service of the Company. I returned to England last year, on inheriting the fortune of an uncle, among whose possessions was the house in question. I found it shut up and uninhabited. I was told that it was haunted, that no one would inhabit it. I smiled at what seemed to me so idle a story. I spent some money in repairing it—added to its old-fashioned furniture a few modern articles—advertised it, and obtained a lodger for a year. He was a colonel retired on half-pay. He came in with his family, a son and a daughter, and four or five servants: they all left the house the next day; and, although each of them declared that he had seen something different from that which had scared the

others, a something still was equally terrible to all. I really could not in conscience sue, nor even blame, the colonel for breach of agreement. Then I put in the old woman I have spoken of, and she was empowered to let the house in apartments. I never had one lodger who stayed more than three days. I do not tell you their stories—to no two lodgers have there been exactly the same phenomena repeated. It is better that you should judge for yourself, than enter the house with an imagination influenced by previous narratives; only be prepared to see and to hear something or other, and take whatever precautions you yourself please.”

“Have you never had a curiosity yourself to pass a night in that house?”

“Yes. I passed, not a night, but three hours in broad daylight alone in that house. My curiosity is not satisfied, but it is quenched. I have no desire to renew the experiment. You cannot complain, you see, sir, that I am not sufficiently candid; and unless your interest be exceedingly eager and your nerves unusually strong, I honestly add, that I advise you *not* to pass a night in that house.”

“My interest *is* exceedingly keen,” said I; “and though only a coward will boast of his nerves in situations wholly unfamiliar to him, yet my nerves have been seasoned in such variety of danger that I have the right to rely on them—even in a haunted house.”

Mr J—— said very little more; he took the keys of the house out of his bureau, gave them to me,—and

thanking him cordially for his frankness, and his urbane concession to my wish, I carried off my prize.

Impatient for the experiment, as soon as I reached home, I summoned my confidential servant—a young man of gay spirits, fearless temper, and as free from superstitious prejudice as any one I could think of.

“F——,” said I, “you remember in Germany how disappointed we were at not finding a ghost in that old castle, which was said to be haunted by a headless apparition? Well, I have heard of a house in London which, I have reason to hope, is decidedly haunted. I mean to sleep there to-night. From what I hear, there is no doubt that something will allow itself to be seen or to be heard—something, perhaps, excessively horrible. Do you think, if I take you with me, I may rely on your presence of mind, whatever may happen?”

“Oh, sir! pray trust me,” answered F——, grinning with delight.

“Very well; then here are the keys of the house—this is the address. Go now,—select for me any bedroom you please; and since the house has not been inhabited for weeks, make up a good fire—air the bed well—see, of course, that there are candles as well as fuel. Take with you my revolver and my dagger—so much for my weapons—arm yourself equally well; and if we are not a match for a dozen ghosts, we shall be but a sorry couple of Englishmen.”

I was engaged for the rest of the day on business so urgent that I had not leisure to think much on the nocturnal adventure to which I had plighted my

honour. I dined alone, and very late ; and while dining, read, as is my habit. I selected one of the volumes of Macaulay's Essays. I thought to myself that I would take the book with me ; there was so much of healthfulness in the style, and practical life in the subjects, that it would serve as an antidote against the influences of superstitious fancy.

Accordingly, about half-past nine, I put the book into my pocket, and strolled leisurely towards the haunted house. I took with me a favourite dog,—an exceedingly sharp, bold, and vigilant bull-terrier,—a dog fond of prowling about strange ghostly corners and passages at night in search of rats—a dog of dogs for a ghost.

It was a summer night, but chilly, the sky somewhat gloomy and overcast. Still there was a moon—faint and sickly, but still a moon—and if the clouds permitted, after midnight it would be brighter.

I reached the house, knocked, and my servant opened with a cheerful smile.

“All right, sir, and very comfortable.”

“Oh !” said I, rather disappointed ; “have you not seen nor heard anything remarkable ?”

“Well, sir, I must own I have heard something queer.”

“What ?—what ?”

“The sound of feet pattering behind me ; and once or twice small noises like whispers close at my ear—nothing more.”

“You are not at all frightened ?”

“I ! not a bit of it, sir ;” and the man's bold look

reassured me on one point—viz., that, happen what might, he would not desert me.

We were in the hall, the street-door closed, and my attention was now drawn to my dog. He had at first run in eagerly enough, but had sneaked back to the door, and was scratching and whining to get out. After patting him on the head, and encouraging him gently, the dog seemed to reconcile himself to the situation, and followed me and F—— through the house, but keeping close at my heels instead of hurrying inquisitively in advance, which was his usual and normal habit in all strange places. We first visited the subterranean apartments, the kitchen and other offices, and especially the cellars, in which last there were two or three bottles of wine still left in a bin, covered with cobwebs, and evidently, by their appearance, undisturbed for many years. It was clear that the ghosts were not winebibbers. For the rest we discovered nothing of interest. There was a gloomy little back-yard, with very high walls. The stones of this yard were very damp ; and what with the damp, and what with the dust and smoke-grime on the pavement, our feet left a slight impression where we passed. And now appeared the first strange phenomenon witnessed by myself in this strange abode. I saw, just before me, the print of a foot suddenly form itself, as it were. I stopped, caught hold of my servant, and pointed to it. In advance of that footprint as suddenly dropped another. We both saw it. I advanced quickly to the place ; the footprint kept advancing before me, a small

footprint—the foot of a child: the impression was too faint thoroughly to distinguish the shape, but it seemed to us both that it was the print of a naked foot. This phenomenon ceased when we arrived at the opposite wall, nor did it repeat itself on returning. We remounted the stairs, and entered the rooms on the ground floor, a dining parlour, a small back-parlour, and a still smaller third room that had been probably appropriated to a footman—all still as death. We then visited the drawing-rooms, which seemed fresh and new. In the front room I seated myself in an arm-chair. F—— placed on the table the candlestick with which he had lighted us. I told him to shut the door. As he turned to do so, a chair opposite to me moved from the wall quickly and noiselessly, and dropped itself about a yard from my own chair, immediately fronting it.

“Why, this is better than the turning-tables,” said I, with a half-laugh; and as I laughed, my dog put back his head and howled.

F——, coming back, had not observed the movement of the chair. He employed himself now in stilling the dog. I continued to gaze on the chair, and fancied I saw on it a pale blue misty outline of a human figure, but an outline so indistinct that I could only distrust my own vision. The dog was now quiet. “Put back that chair opposite to me,” said I to F——; “put it back to the wall.”

F—— obeyed. “Was that you, sir?” said he, turning abruptly.

“I!—what?”

“Why, something struck me. I felt it sharply on the shoulder—just here.”

“No,” said I. “But we have jugglers present, and though we may not discover their tricks, we shall catch *them* before they frighten *us*.”

We did not stay long in the drawing-rooms—in fact, they felt so damp and so chilly that I was glad to get to the fire up-stairs. We locked the doors of the drawing-rooms—a precaution which, I should observe, we had taken with all the rooms we had searched below. The bedroom my servant had selected for me was the best on the floor—a large one, with two windows fronting the street. The four-posted bed, which took up no inconsiderable space, was opposite to the fire, which burned clear and bright ; a door in the wall to the left, between the bed and the window, communicated with the room which my servant appropriated to himself. This last was a small room with a sofa-bed, and had no communication with the landing-place—no other door but that which conducted to the bedroom I was to occupy. On either side of my fireplace was a cupboard, without locks, flush with the wall, and covered with the same dull-brown paper. We examined these cupboards—only hooks to suspend female dresses—nothing else ; we sounded the walls—evidently solid—the outer walls of the building. Having finished the survey of these apartments, warmed myself a few moments, and lighted my cigar, I then, still accompanied by F——, went forth to complete my reconnoitre. In the landing-place there was another

door ; it was closed firmly. "Sir," said my servant, in surprise, "I unlocked this door with all the others when I first came ; it cannot have got locked from the inside, for——"

Before he had finished his sentence, the door, which neither of us then was touching, opened quietly of itself. We looked at each other a single instant. The same thought seized both—some human agency might be detected here. I rushed in first, my servant followed. A small blank dreary room without furniture—a few empty boxes and hampers in a corner—a small window—the shutters closed—not even a fireplace—no other door but that by which we had entered—no carpet on the floor, and the floor seemed very old, uneven, worm-eaten, mended here and there, as was shown by the whiter patches on the wood ; but no living being, and no visible place in which a living being could have hidden. As we stood gazing round, the door by which we had entered closed as quietly as it had before opened : we were imprisoned.

For the first time I felt a creep of undefinable horror. Not so my servant. "Why, they don't think to trap us, sir ; I could break that trumpery door with a kick of my foot."

"Try first if it will open to your hand," said I, shaking off the vague apprehension that had seized me, "while I unclosethe shutters and see what is without."

I unbarred the shutters—the window looked on the little back-yard I have before described ; there was no ledge without—nothing to break the sheer descent of

the wall. No man getting out of that window would have found any footing till he had fallen on the stones below.

F——, meanwhile, was vainly attempting to open the door. He now turned round to me, and asked my permission to use force. And I should here state, in justice to the servant, that, far from evincing any superstitious terrors, his nerve, composure, and even gaiety amidst circumstances so extraordinary, compelled my admiration, and made me congratulate myself on having secured a companion in every way fitted to the occasion. I willingly gave him the permission he required. But though he was a remarkably strong man, his force was as idle as his milder efforts ; the door did not even shake to his stoutest kick. Breathless and panting, he desisted. I then tried the door myself, equally in vain. As I ceased from the effort, again that creep of horror came over me ; but this time it was more cold and stubborn. I felt as if some strange and ghastly exhalation were rising up from the chinks of that rugged floor, and filling the atmosphere with a venomous influence hostile to human life. The door now very slowly and quietly opened as if of its own accord. We precipitated ourselves into the landing-place. We both saw a large pale light—as large as the human figure, but shapeless and unsubstantial—move before us, and ascend the stairs that led from the landing into the attics. I followed the light, and my servant followed me. It entered to the right of the landing, a small garret, of which the door stood open. I entered

in the same instant. The light then collapsed into a small globule, exceedingly brilliant and vivid ; rested a moment on a bed in the corner, quivered, and vanished. We approached the bed and examined it—a half-tester, such as is commonly found in attics devoted to servants. On the drawers that stood near it we perceived an old faded silk kerchief, with the needle still left in a rent half repaired. The kerchief was covered with dust ; probably it had belonged to the old woman who had last died in that house, and this might have been her sleeping-room. I had sufficient curiosity to open the drawers : there were a few odds and ends of female dress, and two letters tied round with a narrow ribbon of faded yellow. I took the liberty to possess myself of the letters. We found nothing else in the room worth noticing—nor did the light reappear ; but we distinctly heard, as we turned to go, a pattering footfall on the floor—just before us. We went through the other attics (in all four), the footfall still preceding us. Nothing to be seen—nothing but the footfall heard. I had the letters in my hand : just as I was descending the stairs I distinctly felt my wrist seized, and a faint soft effort made to draw the letters from my clasp. I only held them the more tightly, and the effort ceased.

We regained the bedchamber appropriated to myself, and I then remarked that my dog had not followed us when we had left it. He was thrusting himself close to the fire, and trembling. I was impatient to examine the letters ; and while I read them, my servant

opened a little box in which he had deposited the weapons I had ordered him to bring ; took them out, placed them on a table close at my bed-head, and then occupied himself in soothing the dog, who, however, seemed to heed him very little.

The letters were short—they were dated ; the dates exactly thirty-five years ago. They were evidently from a lover to his mistress, or a husband to some young wife. Not only the terms of expression, but a distinct reference to a former voyage, indicated the writer to have been a seafarer. The spelling and handwriting were those of a man imperfectly educated, but still the language itself was forcible. In the expressions of endearment there was a kind of rough wild love ; but here and there were dark unintelligible hints at some secret not of love—some secret that seemed of crime. “We ought to love each other,” was one of the sentences I remember, “for how every one else would execrate us if all was known.” Again : “Don’t let any one be in the same room with you at night—you talk in your sleep.” And again : “What’s done can’t be undone ; and I tell you there’s nothing against us unless the dead could come to life.” Here there was underlined in a better handwriting (a female’s), “They do !” At the end of the letter latest in date the same female hand had written these words : “Lost at sea the 4th of June, the same day as ——.”

I put down the letters, and began to muse over their contents.

Fearing, however, that the train of thought into

which I felt might unsteady my nerves, I fully determined to keep my mind in a fit state to cope with whatever of marvellous the advancing night might bring forth. I roused myself—laid the letters on the table—stirred up the fire, which was still bright and cheering—and opened my volume of Macaulay. I read quietly enough till about half-past eleven. I then threw myself dressed upon the bed, and told my servant he might retire to his own room, but must keep himself awake. I bade him leave open the door between the two rooms. Thus alone, I kept two candles burning on the table by my bed-head. I placed my watch beside the weapons, and calmly resumed my Macaulay. Opposite to me the fire burned clear; and on the hearth-rug, seemingly asleep, lay the dog. In about twenty minutes I felt an exceedingly cold air pass by my cheek, like a sudden draught. I fancied the door to my right, communicating with the landing-place, must have got open; but no—it was closed. I then turned my glance to my left, and saw the flame of the candles violently swayed as by a wind. At the same moment the watch beside the revolver softly slid from the table—softly, softly—no visible hand—it was gone. I sprang up, seizing the revolver with the one hand, the dagger with the other: I was not willing that my weapons should share the fate of the watch. Thus armed, I looked round the floor—no sign of the watch. Three slow, loud, distinct knocks were now heard at the bed-head; my servant called out, “Is that you, sir?”

“No; be on your guard.”

The dog now roused himself and sat on his haunches, his ears moving quickly backwards and forwards. He kept his eyes fixed on me with a look so strange that he concentrated all my attention on himself. Slowly he rose up, all his hair bristling, and stood perfectly rigid, and with the same wild stare. I had no time, however, to examine the dog. Presently my servant emerged from his room ; and if ever I saw horror in the human face, it was then. I should not have recognised him had we met in the street, so altered was every lineament. He passed by me quickly, saying in a whisper that seemed scarcely to come from his lips, "Run—run ! it is after me !" He gained the door to the landing, pulled it open, and rushed forth. I followed him into the landing involuntarily, calling to him to stop ; but, without heeding me, he bounded down the stairs, clinging to the balusters, and taking several steps at a time. I heard, where I stood, the street-door open—heard it again clap to. I was left alone in the haunted house.

It was but for a moment that I remained undecided whether or not to follow my servant ; pride and curiosity alike forbade so dastardly a flight. I re-entered my room, closing the door after me, and proceeded cautiously into the interior chamber. I encountered nothing to justify my servant's terror. I again carefully examined the walls, to see if there were any concealed door. I could find no trace of one—not even a seam in the dull-brown paper with which the room was hung. How, then, had the THING, whatever

it was, which had so scared him, obtained ingress except through my own chamber?

I returned to my room, shut and locked the door that opened upon the interior one, and stood on the hearth, expectant and prepared. I now perceived that the dog had slunk into an angle of the wall, and was pressing himself close against it, as if literally striving to force his way into it. I approached the animal and spoke to it; the poor brute was evidently beside itself with terror. It showed all its teeth, the slaver dropping from its jaws, and would certainly have bitten me if I had touched it. It did not seem to recognise me. Whoever has seen at the Zoological Gardens a rabbit fascinated by a serpent, cowering in a corner, may form some idea of the anguish which the dog exhibited. Finding all efforts to soothe the animal in vain, and fearing that his bite might be as venomous in that state as in the madness of hydrophobia, I left him alone, placed my weapons on the table beside the fire, seated myself, and recommenced my Macaulay.

Perhaps, in order not to appear seeking credit for a courage, or rather a coolness, which the reader may conceive I exaggerate, I may be pardoned if I pause to indulge in one or two egotistical remarks.

As I hold presence of mind, or what is called courage, to be precisely proportioned to familiarity with the circumstances that lead to it, so I should say that I had been long sufficiently familiar with all experiments that appertain to the Marvellous. I had witnessed many very extraordinary phenomena in various

parts of the world—phenomena that would be either totally disbelieved if I stated them, or ascribed to supernatural agencies. Now, my theory is that the Supernatural is the Impossible, and that what is called supernatural is only a something in the laws of nature of which we have been hitherto ignorant. Therefore, if a ghost rise before me, I have not the right to say, “So, then, the supernatural is possible,” but rather, “So, then, the apparition of a ghost is, contrary to received opinion, within the laws of nature—*i.e.*, not supernatural.”

Now, in all that I had hitherto witnessed, and indeed in all the wonders which the amateurs of mystery in our age record as facts, a material living agency is always required. On the Continent you will find still magicians who assert that they can raise spirits. Assume for the moment that they assert truly, still the living material form of the magician is present; and he is the material agency by which, from some constitutional peculiarities, certain strange phenomena are represented to your natural senses.

Accept, again, as truthful, the tales of Spirit Manifestation in America—musical or other sounds—writings on paper, produced by no discernible hand—articles of furniture moved without apparent human agency—or the actual sight and touch of hands, to which no bodies seem to belong,—still there must be found the MEDIUM or living being, with constitutional peculiarities capable of obtaining these signs. In fine, in all such marvels, supposing even that there is no

imposture, there must be a human being like ourselves, by whom, or through whom, the effects presented to human beings are produced. It is so with the now familiar phenomena of mesmerism or electro-biology; the mind of the person operated on is affected through a material living agent. Nor, supposing it true that a mesmerised patient can respond to the will or passes of a mesmeriser a hundred miles distant, is the response less occasioned by a material being; it may be through a material fluid—call it Electric, call it Odic, call it what you will—which has the power of traversing space and passing obstacles, that the material effect is communicated from one to the other. Hence all that I had hitherto witnessed, or expected to witness, in this strange house, I believed to be occasioned through some agency or medium as mortal as myself; and this idea necessarily prevented the awe with which those who regard as supernatural things that are not within the ordinary operations of nature, might have been impressed by the adventures of that memorable night.

As, then, it was my conjecture that all that was presented, or would be presented, to my senses, must originate in some human being gifted by constitution with the power so to present them, and having some motive so to do, I felt an interest in my theory which, in its way, was rather philosophical than superstitious. And I can sincerely say that I was in as tranquil a temper for observation as any practical experimentalist could be in awaiting the effects of some rare, though perhaps perilous, chemical combination. Of course, the

more I kept my mind detached from fancy, the more the temper fitted for observation would be obtained ; and I therefore riveted eye and thought on the strong daylight sense in the page of my Macaulay.

I now became aware that something interposed between the page and the light—the page was overshadowed : I looked up, and I saw what I shall find it very difficult, perhaps impossible, to describe.

It was a Darkness shaping itself forth from the air in very undefined outline. I cannot say it was of a human form, and yet it had more resemblance to a human form, or rather shadow, than to anything else. As it stood, wholly apart and distinct from the air and the light around it, its dimensions seemed gigantic, the summit nearly touching the ceiling. While I gazed, a feeling of intense cold seized me. An iceberg before me could not more have chilled me ; nor could the cold of an iceberg have been more purely physical. I feel convinced that it was not the cold caused by fear. As I continued to gaze, I thought—but this I cannot say with precision—that I distinguished two eyes looking down on me from the height. One moment I fancied that I distinguished them clearly, the next they seemed gone ; but still two rays of a pale-blue light frequently shot through the darkness, as from the height on which I half believed, half doubted, that I had encountered the eyes.

I strove to speak—my voice utterly failed me ; I could only think to myself, “ Is this fear ? it is *not* fear ! ” I strove to rise—in vain ; I felt as if weighed

down by an irresistible force. Indeed, my impression was that of an immense and overwhelming Power opposed to my volition ; that sense of utter inadequacy to cope with a force beyond man's, which one may feel *physically* in a storm at sea, in a conflagration, or when confronting some terrible wild beast, or rather, perhaps, the shark of the ocean, I felt *morally*. Opposed to my will was another will, as far superior to its strength as storm, fire, and shark are superior in material force to the force of man.

And now, as this impression grew on me—now came, at last, horror—horror to a degree that no words can convey. Still I retained pride, if not courage ; and in my own mind I said, “ This is horror, but it is not fear ; unless I fear, I cannot be harmed ; my reason rejects this thing ; it is an illusion—I do not fear.” With a violent effort I succeeded at last in stretching out my hand towards the weapon on the table : as I did so, on the arm and shoulder I received a strange shock, and my arm fell to my side powerless. And now, to add to my horror, the light began slowly to wane from the candles—they were not, as it were, extinguished, but their flame seemed very gradually withdrawn : it was the same with the fire—the light was extracted from the fuel ; in a few minutes the room was in utter darkness. The dread that came over me, to be thus in the dark with that dark Thing, whose power was so intensely felt, brought a reaction of nerve. In fact, terror had reached that climax, that either my senses must have deserted me, or I must have burst

through the spell. I did burst through it. I found voice, though the voice was a shriek. I remember that I broke forth with words like these,—“ I do not fear, my soul does not fear ;” and at the same time I found the strength to rise. Still in that profound gloom I rushed to one of the windows—tore aside the curtain—flung open the shutters ; my first thought was—LIGHT. And when I saw the moon high, clear, and calm, I felt a joy that almost compensated for the previous terror. There was the moon, there was also the light from the gas-lamps in the deserted, slumbrous street. I turned to look back into the room ; the moon penetrated its shadow very palely and partially—but still there was light. The dark Thing, whatever it might be, was gone—except that I could yet see a dim shadow, which seemed the shadow of that shade, against the opposite wall.

My eye now rested on the table, and from under the table (which was without cloth or cover—an old mahogany round table) there rose a hand, visible as far as the wrist. It was a hand, seemingly, as much of flesh and blood as my own, but the hand of an aged person—lean, wrinkled, small too—a woman’s hand. That hand very softly closed on the two letters that lay on the table : hand and letters both vanished. There then came the same three loud measured knocks I had heard at the bed-head before this extraordinary drama had commenced.

As those sounds slowly ceased, I felt the whole room vibrate sensibly ; and at the far end there rose, as from the floor, sparks or globules like bubbles of light, many-

coloured—green, yellow, fire-red, azure. Up and down, to and fro, hither, thither, as tiny Will-o'-the-Wisps, the sparks moved, slow or swift, each at its own caprice. A chair (as in the drawing-room below) was now advanced from the wall without apparent agency, and placed at the opposite side of the table. Suddenly, as forth from the chair, there grew a shape—a woman's shape. It was distinct as a shape of life—ghastly as a shape of death. The face was that of youth, with a strange mournful beauty; the throat and shoulders were bare, the rest of the form in a loose robe of cloudy white. It began sleeking its long yellow hair, which fell over its shoulders; its eyes were not turned towards me, but to the door; it seemed listening, watching, waiting. The shadow of the shade in the background grew darker; and again I thought I beheld the eyes gleaming out from the summit of the shadow—eyes fixed upon that shape.

As if from the door, though it did not open, there grew out another shape, equally distinct, equally ghastly—a man's shape—a young man's. It was in the dress of the last century, or rather in a likeness of such dress (for both the male shape and the female, though defined, were evidently unsubstantial, impalpable—simulacra—phantasms); and there was something incongruous, grotesque, yet fearful, in the contrast between the elaborate finery, the courtly precision of that old-fashioned garb, with its ruffles and lace and buckles, and the corpse-like aspect and ghost-like stillness of the flitting wearer. Just as the male shape approached

the female, the dark Shadow started from the wall, all three for a moment wrapped in darkness. When the pale light returned, the two phantoms were as if in the grasp of the Shadow that towered between them ; and there was a blood-stain on the breast of the female ; and the phantom male was leaning on its phantom sword, and blood seemed trickling fast from the ruffles, from the lace ; and the darkness of the intermediate Shadow swallowed them up—they were gone. And again the bubbles of light shot, and sailed, and undulated, growing thicker and thicker and more wildly confused in their movements.

The closet door to the right of the fireplace now opened, and from the aperture there came the form of an aged woman. In her hand she held letters—the very letters over which I had seen *the* Hand close ; and behind her I heard a footstep. She turned round as if to listen, and then she opened the letters and seemed to read ; and over her shoulder I saw a livid face, the face as of a man long drowned—bloated, bleached, seaweed tangled in its dripping hair ; and at her feet lay a form as of a corpse, and beside the corpse there cowered a child, a miserable squalid child, with famine in its cheeks and fear in its eyes. And as I looked in the old woman's face, the wrinkles and lines vanished, and it became a face of youth—hard-eyed, stony, but still youth ; and the Shadow darted forth, and darkened over these phantoms as it had darkened over the last.

Nothing now was left but the Shadow, and on that my eyes were intently fixed, till again eyes grew out

of the Shadow—malignant, serpent eyes. And the bubbles of light again rose and fell, and in their disordered, irregular, turbulent maze, mingled with the wau moonlight. And now from these globules themselves, as from the shell of an egg, monstrous things burst out; the air grew filled with them; larvæ so bloodless and so hideous that I can in no way describe them except to remind the reader of the swarming life which the solar microscope brings before his eyes in a drop of water—things transparent, supple, agile, chasing each other, devouring each other—forms like nought ever beheld by the naked eye. As the shapes were without symmetry, so their movements were without order. In their very vagrancies there was no sport; they came round me and round, thicker and faster and swifter, swarming over my head, crawling over my right arm, which was outstretched in involuntary command against all evil beings. Sometimes I felt myself touched, but not by them; invisible hands touched me. Once I felt the clutch as of cold soft fingers at my throat. I was still equally conscious that if I gave way to fear I should be in bodily peril; and I concentrated all my faculties in the single focus of resisting, stubborn will. And I turned my sight from the Shadow—above all, from those strange serpent eyes—eyes that had now become distinctly visible. For there, though in nought else around me, I was aware that there was a WILL, and a will of intense, creative, working evil, which might crush down my own.

The pale atmosphere in the room began now to red-

den as if in the air of some near conflagration. The larvæ grew lurid as things that live in fire. Again the room vibrated ; again were heard the three measured knocks ; and again all things were swallowed up in the darkness of the dark Shadow, as if out of that darkness all had come, into that darkness all returned.

As the gloom receded, the Shadow was wholly gone. Slowly as it had been withdrawn, the flame grew again into the candles on the table, again into the fuel in the grate. The whole room came once more calmly, healthfully into sight.

The two doors were still closed, the door communicating with the servant's room still locked. In the corner of the wall, into which he had so convulsively niched himself, lay the dog. I called to him—no movement ; I approached—the animal was dead ; his eyes protruded ; his tongue out of his mouth ; the froth gathered round his jaws. I took him in my arms ; I brought him to the fire ; I felt acute grief for the loss of my poor favourite—acute self-reproach ; I accused myself of his death ; I imagined he had died of fright. But what was my surprise on finding that his neck was actually broken. Had this been done in the dark?—must it not have been by a hand human as mine?—must there not have been a human agency all the while in that room? Good cause to suspect it. I cannot tell. I cannot do more than state the fact fairly ; the reader may draw his own inference.

Another surprising circumstance—my watch was restored to the table from which it had been so myste-

riously withdrawn ; but it had stopped at the very moment it was so withdrawn ; nor, despite all the skill of the watchmaker, has it ever gone since—that is, it will go in a strange erratic way for a few hours, and then come to a dead stop—it is worthless.

Nothing more chanced for the rest of the night. Nor, indeed, had I long to wait before the dawn broke. Not till it was broad daylight did I quit the haunted house. Before I did so, I revisited the little blind room in which my servant and myself had been for a time imprisoned. I had a strong impression—for which I could not account—that from that room had originated the mechanism of the phenomena—if I may use the term—which had been experienced in my chamber. And though I entered it now in the clear day, with the sun peering through the filmy window, I still felt, as I stood on its floor, the creep of the horror which I had first there experienced the night before, and which had been so aggravated by what had passed in my own chamber. I could not, indeed, bear to stay more than half a minute within those walls. I descended the stairs, and again I heard the footfall before me ; and when I opened the street door, I thought I could distinguish a very low laugh. I gained my own home, expecting to find my runaway servant there. But he had not presented himself ; nor did I hear more of him for three days, when I received a letter from him, dated from Liverpool, to this effect :—

“HONOURED SIR,—I humbly entreat your pardon,

though I can scarcely hope that you will think I deserve it, unless—which Heaven forbid !—you saw what I did. I feel that it will be years before I can recover myself ; and as to being fit for service, it is out of the question. I am therefore going to my brother-in-law at Melbourne. The ship sails to-morrow. Perhaps the long voyage may set me up. I do nothing now but start and tremble, and fancy it is behind me. I humbly beg you, honoured sir, to order my clothes, and whatever wages are due to me, to be sent to my mother's, at Walworth,—John knows her address."

The letter ended with additional apologies, somewhat incoherent, and explanatory details as to effects that had been under the writer's charge.

This flight may perhaps warrant a suspicion that the man wished to go to Australia, and had been somehow or other fraudulently mixed up with the events of the night. I say nothing in refutation of that conjecture ; rather, I suggest it as one that would seem to many persons the most probable solution of improbable occurrences. My belief in my own theory remained unshaken. I returned in the evening to the house, to bring away in a hack cab the things I had left there, with my poor dog's body. In this task I was not disturbed, nor did any incident worth note befall me, except that still, on ascending and descending the stairs, I heard the same footfall in advance. On leaving the house, I went to Mr J——'s. He was at home. I returned him the keys, told him that my

curiosity was sufficiently gratified, and was about to relate quickly what had passed, when he stopped me and said, though with much politeness, that he had no longer any interest in a mystery which none had ever solved.

I determined at least to tell him of the two letters I had read, as well as of the extraordinary manner in which they had disappeared, and I then inquired if he thought they had been addressed to the woman who had died in the house, and if there were anything in her early history which could possibly confirm the dark suspicions to which the letters gave rise. Mr J—— seemed startled, and, after musing a few moments, answered, “I am but little acquainted with the woman’s earlier history, except, as I before told you, that her family were known to mine. But you revive some vague reminiscences to her prejudice. I will make inquiries, and inform you of their result. Still, even if we could admit the popular superstition that a person who had been either the perpetrator or the victim of dark crimes in life could revisit, as a restless spirit, the scene in which those crimes had been committed, I should observe that the house was infested by strange sights and sounds before the old woman died—you smile—what would you say?”

“I would say this, that I am convinced, if we could get to the bottom of these mysteries, we should find a living human agency.”

“What! you believe it is all an imposture? for what object?”

“Not an imposture in the ordinary sense of the word. If suddenly I were to sink into a deep sleep, from which you could not awake me, but in that sleep could answer questions with an accuracy which I could not pretend to when awake—tell you what money you had in your pocket—nay, describe your very thoughts—it is not necessarily an imposture, any more than it is necessarily supernatural. I should be, unconsciously to myself, under a mesmeric influence, conveyed to me from a distance by a human being who had acquired power over me by previous *rapport*.”

“But if a mesmeriser could so affect another living being, can you suppose that a mesmeriser could also affect inanimate objects : move chairs—open and shut doors ?”

“Or impress our senses with the belief in such effects—we never having been *en rapport* with the person acting on us? No. What is commonly called mesmerism could not do this; but there may be a power akin to mesmerism, and superior to it—the power that in the old days was called Magic. That such a power may extend to all inanimate objects of matter, I do not say; but if so, it would not be against nature—it would be only a rare power in nature which might be given to constitutions with certain peculiarities, and cultivated by practice to an extraordinary degree. That such a power might extend over the dead—that is, over certain thoughts and memories that the dead may still retain—and compel, not that which ought properly to be called the SOUL, and

which is far beyond human reach, but rather a phantom of what has been most earth-stained on earth, to make itself apparent to our senses—is a very ancient though obsolete theory, upon which I will hazard no opinion. But I do not conceive the power would be supernatural. Let me illustrate what I mean from an experiment which Paracelsus describes as not difficult, and which the author of the ‘*Curiosities of Literature*’ cites as credible:—A flower perishes; you burn it. Whatever were the elements of that flower while it lived are gone, dispersed, you know not whither; you can never discover nor recollect them. But you can, by chemistry, out of the burnt dust of that flower, raise a spectrum of the flower, just as it seemed in life. It may be the same with the human being. The soul has as much escaped you as the essence or elements of the flower. Still you may make a spectrum of it. And this phantom, though in the popular superstition it is held to be the soul of the departed, must not be confounded with the true soul; it is but the eidolon of the dead form. Hence, like the best attested stories of ghosts or spirits, the thing that most strikes us is the absence of what we hold to be soul; that is, of superior emancipated intelligence. These apparitions come for little or no object—they seldom speak when they do come; if they speak, they utter no ideas above those of an ordinary person on earth. American spirit-seers have published volumes of communications in prose and verse, which they assert to be given in the

names of the most illustrious dead—Shakespeare, Bacon—Heaven knows whom. Those communications, taking the best, are certainly not a whit of higher order than would be communications from living persons of fair talent and education ; they are wondrously inferior to what Bacon, Shakespeare, and Plato said and wrote when on earth. Nor, what is more noticeable, do they ever contain an idea that was not on the earth before. Wonderful, therefore, as such phenomena may be (granting them to be truthful), I see much that philosophy may question, nothing that it is incumbent on philosophy to deny—viz., nothing supernatural. They are but ideas conveyed somehow or other (we have not yet discovered the means) from one mortal brain to another. Whether, in so doing, tables walk of their own accord, or fiend-like shapes appear in a magic circle, or bodiless hands rise and remove material objects, or a Thing of Darkness, such as presented itself to me, freeze our blood—still am I persuaded that these are but agencies conveyed as by electric wires, to my own brain from the brain of another. In some constitutions there is a natural chemistry, and those constitutions may produce chemic wonders—in others a natural fluid, call it electricity, and these may produce electric wonders. But the wonders differ from Normal Science in this—they are alike objectless, purposeless, puerile, frivolous. They lead on to no grand results ; and therefore the world does not heed, and true sages have not cultivated them. But sure I am, that of all I saw or heard, a man,

human as myself, was the remote originator; and I believe unconsciously to himself as to the exact effects produced, for this reason: no two persons, you say, have ever told you that they experienced exactly the same thing. Well, observe, no two persons ever experience exactly the same dream. If this were an ordinary imposture, the machinery would be arranged for results that would but little vary; if it were a supernatural agency permitted by the Almighty, it would surely be for some definite end. These phenomena belong to neither class; my persuasion is, that they originate in some brain now far distant; that that brain had no distinct volition in anything that occurred; that what does occur reflects but its devious, motley, ever-shifting, half-formed thoughts; in short, that it has been but the dreams of such a brain put into action and invested with a semi-substance. That this brain is of immense power, that it can set matter into movement, that it is malignant and destructive, I believe; some material force must have killed my dog; the same force might, for aught I know, have sufficed to kill myself, had I been as subjugated by terror as the dog—had my intellect or my spirit given me no counter-vailing resistance in my will.”

“It killed your dog! that is fearful! Indeed it is strange that no animal can be induced to stay in that house; not even a cat—Rats and mice are never found in it.”

“The instincts of the brute creation detect influences deadly to their existence. Man’s reason has a sense

less subtle, because it has a resisting power more supreme. But enough ; do you comprehend my theory ?”

“Yes, though imperfectly—and I accept any crotchet (pardon the word), however odd, rather than embrace at once the notion of ghosts and hobgoblins we imbibed in our nurseries. Still, to my unfortunate house the evil is the same. What on earth can I do with the house ?”

“I will tell you what I would do. I am convinced, from my own internal feelings, that the small unfurnished room at right angles to the door of the bedroom which I occupied, forms a starting-point or receptacle for the influences which haunt the house ; and I strongly advise you to have the walls opened, the floor removed—nay, the whole room pulled down. I observe that it is detached from the body of the house, built over the small back-yard, and could be removed without injury to the rest of the building.”

“And you think if I did that——”

“You would cut off the telegraph wires. Try it. I am so persuaded that I am right, that I will pay half the expense if you will allow me to direct the operations.”

“Nay, I am well able to afford the cost ; for the rest, allow me to write to you.”

About ten days afterwards I received a letter from Mr J——, telling me that he had visited the house since I had seen him ; that he had found the two letters I had described, replaced in the drawer from which I had taken them ; that he had read them with misgivings like my own ; that he had instituted a cautious inquiry about the woman to whom I rightly

conjectured they had been written. It seemed that thirty-six years ago (a year before the date of the letters) she had married, against the wish of her relations, an American of very suspicious character ; in fact, he was generally believed to have been a pirate. She herself was the daughter of very respectable tradespeople, and had served in the capacity of a nursery governess before her marriage. She had a brother, a widower, who was considered wealthy, and who had one child of about six years old. A month after the marriage the body of this brother was found in the Thames, near London Bridge ; there seemed some marks of violence about his throat, but they were not deemed sufficient to warrant the inquest in any other verdict than that of "found drowned."

The American and his wife took charge of the little boy, the deceased brother having by his will left his sister the guardian of his only child—and in event of the child's death, the sister inherited. The child died about six months afterwards—it was supposed to have been neglected and ill-treated. The neighbours deposed to have heard it shriek at night. The surgeon who had examined it after death, said that it was emaciated as if from want of nourishment, and the body was covered with livid bruises. It seemed that one winter night the child had sought to escape—crept out into the back-yard—tried to scale the wall—fallen back exhausted, and been found at morning on the stones in a dying state. But though there was some evidence of cruelty, there was none of murder :

and the aunt and her husband had sought to palliate cruelty by alleging the exceeding stubbornness and perversity of the child, who was declared to be half-witted. Be that as it may, at the orphan's death the aunt inherited her brother's fortune. Before the first wedded year was out, the American quitted England abruptly, and never returned to it. He obtained a cruising vessel, which was lost in the Atlantic two years afterwards. The widow was left in affluence : but reverses of various kinds had befallen her : a bank broke—an investment failed—she went into a small business and became insolvent—then she entered into service, sinking lower and lower, from housekeeper down to maid-of-all-work—never long retaining a place, though nothing decided against her character was ever alleged. She was considered sober, honest, and peculiarly quiet in her ways ; still nothing prospered with her. And so she had dropped into the workhouse, from which Mr J—— had taken her, to be placed in charge of the very house which she had rented as mistress in the first year of her wedded life.

Mr J—— added that he had passed an hour alone in the unfurnished room which I had urged him to destroy, and that his impressions of dread while there were so great, though he had neither heard nor seen anything, that he was eager to have the walls bared and the floors removed as I had suggested. He had engaged persons for the work, and would commence any day I would name.

The day was accordingly fixed. I repaired to the

haunted house—we went into the blind dreary room, took up the skirting, and then the floors. Under the rafters, covered with rubbish, was found a trap-door, quite large enough to admit a man. It was closely nailed down, with clamps and rivets of iron. On removing these we descended into a room below, the existence of which had never been suspected. In this room there had been a window and a flue, but they had been bricked over, evidently for many years. By the help of candles we examined this place; it still retained some mouldering furniture—three chairs, an oak settle, a table—all of the fashion of about eighty years ago. There was a chest of drawers against the wall, in which we found, half-rotted away, old-fashioned articles of a man's dress, such as might have been worn eighty or a hundred years ago by a gentleman of some rank—costly steel buckles and buttons, like those yet worn in court dresses—a handsome court sword; in a waistcoat which had once been rich with gold lace, but which was now blackened and foul with damp, we found five guineas, a few silver coins, and an ivory ticket, probably for some place of entertainment long since passed away. But our main discovery was in a kind of iron safe fixed to the wall, the lock of which it cost us much trouble to get picked.

In this safe were three shelves and two small drawers. Ranged on the shelves were several small bottles of crystal, hermetically stopped. They contained colourless volatile essences, of the nature of which I shall only say that they were not poisons—phosphor and

ammonia entered into some of them. There were also some very curious glass tubes, and a small pointed rod of iron, with a large lump of rock crystal, and another of amber—also a loadstone of great power.

In one of the drawers we found a miniature portrait set in gold, and retaining the freshness of its colours most remarkably, considering the length of time it had probably been there. The portrait was that of a man who might be somewhat advanced in middle life, perhaps forty-seven or forty-eight.

It was a remarkable face—a most impressive face. If you could fancy some mighty serpent transformed into man, preserving in the human lineaments the old serpent type, you would have a better idea of that countenance than long descriptions can convey: the width and flatness of frontal—the tapering elegance of contour disguising the strength of the deadly jaw—the long, large, terrible eye, glittering and green as the emerald—and withal a certain ruthless calm, as if from the consciousness of an immense power.

Mechanically I turned round the miniature to examine the back of it, and on the back was engraved a pentacle; in the middle of the pentacle a ladder, and the third step of the ladder was formed by the date 1765. Examining still more minutely, I detected a spring; this, on being pressed, opened the back of the miniature as a lid. Withinside the lid were engraved, “Mariana to thee—Be faithful in life and in death to ——.” Here follows a name that I will not mention, but it was not unfamiliar to me. I had heard it

spoken of by old men in my childhood as the name borne by a dazzling charlatan who had made a great sensation in London for a year or so, and had fled the country on the charge of a double murder within his own house—that of his mistress and his rival. I said nothing of this to Mr J——, to whom reluctantly I resigned the miniature.

We had found no difficulty in opening the first drawer within the iron safe ; we found great difficulty in opening the second : it was not locked, but it resisted all efforts, till we inserted in the chinks the edge of a chisel. When we had thus drawn it forth, we found a very singular apparatus in the nicest order. Upon a small thin book, or rather tablet, was placed a saucer of crystal ; this saucer was filled with a clear liquid—on that liquid floated a kind of compass, with a needle shifting rapidly round ; but instead of the usual points of a compass were seven strange characters, not very unlike those used by astrologers to denote the planets. A peculiar, but not strong nor displeasing odour, came from this drawer, which was lined with a wood that we afterwards discovered to be hazel. Whatever the cause of this odour, it produced a material effect on the nerves. We all felt it, even the two workmen who were in the room—a creeping, tingling sensation from the tips of the fingers to the roots of the hair. Impatient to examine the tablet I removed the saucer. As I did so the needle of the compass went round and round with exceeding swiftness, and I felt a shock that ran through my whole

frame, so that I dropped the saucer on the floor. The liquid was spilt—the saucer was broken—the compass rolled to the end of the room—and at that instant the walls shook to and fro, as if a giant had swayed and rocked them.

The two workmen were so frightened that they ran up the ladder by which we had descended from the trap-door; but seeing that nothing more happened, they were easily induced to return.

Meanwhile I had opened the tablet; it was bound in plain red leather, with a silver clasp; it contained but one sheet of thick vellum, and on that sheet were inscribed, within a double pentacle, words in old monkish Latin, which are literally to be translated thus:—On all that it can reach within these walls—sentient or inanimate, living or dead—as moves the needle, so work my will! Accursed be the house, and restless be the dwellers therein.”

We found no more. Mr J—— burnt the tablet and its anathema. He razed to the foundations the part of the building containing the secret room with the chamber over it. He had then the courage to inhabit the house himself for a month, and a quieter, better-conditioned house could not be found in all London. Subsequently he let it to advantage, and his tenant has made no complaints.

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